

DISCOURSES

William ON *William*

Scenery collected 1801—

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY JACOB DUCHÉ, M. A.

K
RECTOR of CHRIST-CHURCH and St. PETER'S,
in PHILADELPHIA;

AND FORMERLY OF

CLARE-HALL, CAMBRIDGE.

V O L. I.

D U B L I N:

PRINTED BY B. DUGDALE, NO. 150, CAPEL STREET.

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.

DISCOVERED

At the time of the discovery

of the subject in 1801

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

By JACOB DUGHE, M.A.

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH AND ST. PETER'S



CHANCE-HALL, CAMBRIDGE

VOL. I

D. D. E. I. N. S.

Printed by J. DUGGIE, No. 12, CAVENDISH STREET.

MDCCLXXXVII

DEDICATION
TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LADY JULIANA PENN.

MADAM,

I HAVE ever deemed it one of the most favourable circumstances of my life, that your Ladyship condescended to honour my early youth with your kind countenance and protection. Your amiable character, and exemplary virtues, have always thrown such a lustre around you, as could not but enlighten and improve those, who came within their influence. This testimony from me is no more than the just tribute of a grateful heart.

I am, therefore, happy in having your Ladyship's permission to inscribe to you the following discourses. You are no stranger to the sentiments they contain: you love and honour the doctrines they inculcate.

The author intreats to be indulged with a continuance of that regard, which your Ladyship hath hitherto shewn him; and which he hath always held more desirable, in proportion as he hath been better qualified to judge of what is truly honourable and estimable in the intercourses of social life.

With this sentiment deeply impressed upon his mind, he cannot but rejoice in the opportunity your Ladyship hath granted him, of thus publicly subscribing himself,

MADAM, 20 MA 59

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

Most obliged and

Most faithful Servant,

J. D U C H E.

P R E F A C E.

THE following discourses were preached in the united Churches of Christ Church and St. Peter, in the City of Philadelphia, of which the author was appointed assistant minister in the year 1759, and to the rectorship of which he was elected in the year 1775.

The reader will find in them no display of genius or of erudition. To the former, the author hath no claim: of the latter, he contents himself with as much as is competent to the discharge of his pastoral duty. His divinity, he trusts, is that of the BIBLE: to no other Standard of Truth can he venture to appeal. Sensible, however, of his own fallibility, he wishes not to obtrude his peculiar sentiments; nor to have them received any further, than they carry with them that only fair title to reception, a conviction of their truth and usefulness. From his own Heart he hath written to the Hearts of others; and if any of his readers find not THERE the Ground of his doctrines, they are, surely, at liberty to pass them by, if they do it with Christian Candour, and to leave it to time and their own reflections, to discover that Ground or not.

UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE he considers as the SUBLIME of religion; the true TASTE for which, can only be derived from the Fountain of INFINITE LOVE, by inward and spiritual communications. The mind, that is possessed of this true Taste, whatever its peculiarity of opinion may be, cannot
be

be very "far from the Kingdom of God."—"God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." One transgression of the great Law of Love, even in the minutest instance, must appear more heinous in the Sight of the God of Love, than a thousand errors in matters of doctrine or opinion.

If the reader peruses these volumes under the influence of such sentiments, it is not likely, that he will be offended with any singularities of diction, or any inelegant and colloquial expressions he may now and then meet with. Much less will his censure be incurred by the constant use of SCRIPTURAL Ideas, and SCRIPTURAL Language, in preference to what are called MORAL and PHILOSOPHICAL. Deviations from the Simplicity of EVANGELICAL TRUTH, have too often been occasioned by deviations from the Simplicity of EVANGELICAL LANGUAGE. A Christian ought never to be "ashamed of the GOSPEL OF CHRIST, which is the Power of God unto Salvation," but should always speak of Christian Truths by Christian Names.

The revival and correction of these discourses have relieved the author's mind from much of that anxiety and dejection, which a long absence from his family and his churches had occasioned. And he is now happy in the thought, that these volumes will ere long reach his native country, and revive the memory of his labours of love among a people, with whom he enjoyed a reciprocation of kindness and affection, which for eighteen years had known no abatement or interruption.

He most gratefully acknowledges the kind and honourable reception he hath met with since his
arrival

P R E F A C E.

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arrival in England; the chearfulness and generosity with which persons of all ranks have honoured his publication.

To his dear and valuable friend, the Author of the late accurate and elegant Translation of THOMAS à KEMPIS, he is sincerely thankful for his kind and chearful advice and assistance, in conducting the whole publication, to which the author's inexperience in printing, as well as his frequent and necessary absence from the press, would have rendered him altogether unequal.

He hath only to add, that the revisal and publishing of these discourses was undertaken at the instance of some most respectable names, under whose kind patronage, and in hopes of every indulgence from the candour of the publick, he now ventures to send them abroad.

Hampstead.

D I S C O U R S E V.

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Humfrey

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DISCOURSE I.

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“BUT WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF ALL HER
“CHILDREN.”

IF we take an impartial view of the sentiments and conduct of mankind with respect to religion, we shall find, that their errors in speculation, as well as in practice, originate, for the most part, in the will; that their understandings are blinded by their passions, and that their ignorance of truth too often proceeds from their aversion to goodness.

To combat this prevailing depravity of human nature, and to strike at that root of evil which we bring with us into the world, was the grand and principal design of all those different dispensations, by which Heaven hath condescended, from time to time, to speak to the sons of men. Instead, however, of yielding a grateful attention to this benevolent purpose, they have in some instances, wholly rejected, and, in others, perversely misconstrued, the dispensations themselves. Whether “God spake at sundry times, and in divers manners, in times past, unto the fathers by the prophets;” or, whether he spake, as in these latter days, to the children, by his own INCARNATE SON; the generality of men have either been deaf to the salutary message, or have availed themselves

themselves of some idle pretexts to elude a compliance with its most serious and solemn contents. Hence arose the inattention and opposition of ancient unbelievers, to the missions of patriarchs and prophets; and hence it is, that infidels of later ages have called in question the truth and authority of that most full and complete Revelation of the Divine Will, with which mankind have been favoured by the ministration of the BLESSED JESUS. Far, however, from resenting their obstinacy, or indignantly withholding from them any further communications of Divine Light, the great GOD AND FATHER OF SPIRITS hath still persevered in carrying on the purposes of his Love; and, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear," still seeks, by a variety of dispensations, to gain possession of the hearts of his creatures. Notwithstanding, therefore, the general indifference and obstinacy that have prevailed, there have not been wanting in every age and nation, some docile, virtuous minds, who have listened to the Heavenly Voice, and received with gratitude the instructions of that "Wisdom which is from above;" and who, as her true children, have vindicated her ways to man, and admired and justified the different methods by which she manifests herself to different souls.

The truth of these observations we find remarkably exemplified in that conduct and behaviour of the Jews, and particularly of the sect of the Pharisees, which is mentioned in the verses preceding my text, and which indeed gave rise to the pertinent and beautiful maxim there expressed.

Ignorant of the spirit of that dispensation under which they lived, and perversely attached to those externals of their religion, that most gratified their pride and selfishness, they seem to have been equally
offended

offended with the doctrines and manners of John the Baptist, and those of the BLESSED JESUS. And though the grand object of the Master and his forerunner was one and the same, even the reformation of the heart and life; and though the outward means, however inconsistent they might appear, were but different parts of the same spiritual and redeeming process; yet these degenerate Israelites sought to stifle the power of conviction in their breasts, by childishly objecting to the abstracted, severe, and rigorous life of the Baptist on the one hand, and the easy, open, and condescending behaviour of JESUS on the other; insinuating, that the former was only the effect of a gloomy, dark, and diabolical spirit; and that the latter shewed a familiarity and levity unworthy the character of a prophet sent from God.

OUR BLESSED LORD exposes the weakness and inconsistency of these objections; by the following apt and lively similitude: "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept." That is to say: We have taken every method we could devise to engage your attention, and to prevail upon you to bear a part in our recreations; but you have unkindly and sullenly refused to come. We have endeavoured to adapt our little sports and exercises to what we conceived might be your particular taste and humour; but still we have failed of success.

In application of this allusion, our LORD proceeds—
"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil." The austerity of the Baptist's life, which was meant to inculcate

inculcate a lesson of self-denial, and abstraction from the follies and vanities of a worldly life, as well as a solemn preparation for the happiness of an heavenly one, ye maliciously declare to have proceeded from the melancholy suggestion of some dark and evil spirit, that hurried him into the desert, and secluded him from all affectionate intercourse with men. On the other hand, because "the Son of man is come eating and drinking, ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" To answer the great purposes of Divine Love, I have, with condescending freedom, mingled with all ranks of people; put myself in the way of the giddy and the profligate, and even accepted the invitations of publicans and sinners. For this, without knowing the motives of my conduct, you have vilified me with the opprobrious names of glutton and drunkard; and insinuated, that the friendly attention I shewed to men of their character, proceeded not from a regard to their souls, but from a fondness for their vices. But notwithstanding your blindness and obduracy, notwithstanding your weak and wicked misconstructions, be assured, there are those, who can do justice to these dispensations of Heaven, whose minds, illuminated from above, can discern the beauty, propriety, and uniformity of design, which Wisdom manifests in these various methods of addressing herself to the sons of men. Such children of Wisdom are abundantly convinced, that the self-denying life of the Baptist was necessarily preparative to that meek, gentle, condescending Life of Love, which I have inculcated in my precepts, and recommended and enforced by my example; and that both these are the happy effects of that Redeeming Power, which I manifest in the hearts of those, who, with simplicity and self-abasement, receive and gratefully acknowledge my spiritual salutary visits. "But Wisdom is justified of all her children."

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The truth was this: the Pharisees considered the severe exercises of John, his contempt of the world, and total disregard of the pleasures and honours of life, as a personal censure of their hypocritical pretensions to religion, by which, under the appearance of great zeal for the external and ceremonial parts of the law, they "sought the praises of men, more than the praises of God." In like manner, the humility and condescension of CHRIST, his free and affectionate intercourse with all ranks of people, even with those whom (on account of their ignorance of some minute traditionary precepts of their Rabbins,) they held accursed, were a perpetual impeachment of their intolerable pride and arrogance, and most effectually tended to lessen their credit and reputation with those whom they wished and earnestly sought to engage for their pupils and admirers. No wonder, then, that whilst they continued thus attached to favourite passions and prejudices, they should wilfully misconstrue the purest intentions, and vilify the fairest actions of those, who attempted to combat and expose them. Their objections to the person and doctrines of CHRIST, as well as to those of his illustrious Harbinger, came rather from their wills than their understandings: nor would they ever have called in question the Divine authority of their missions, had not the design and spirit of them militated against their own evil tempers and dispositions: "Light was come unto them; but they chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

In every age of the world, and under every dispensation of religion, human nature, in itself, has always been the same. The serpentine subtilty of human reason, when engaged in the service, and acting under the influence of vice and error, will never be at a loss for arguments to support their cause against the voice of

truth and virtue. Hence the specious objections, which modern infidelity hath thrown out against the necessity of Divine Revelation; and hence the weak and idle censures, which libertinism on the one hand, and false enthusiasm on the other, so liberally denounce against the sincere, honest, and cordial votaries of true Christianity.

Sincerely to be pitied is the poor unbeliever, whose short-sighted reason, incapable of seeing further than the externals of Christianity, furnishes him with some plausible objections, that seem to weaken its outward evidence, but cannot reach the spirit and power by which it is animated and supported. "Christianity was instituted for the common salvation of all men: its essential truths, therefore, are plain and obvious, level to every capacity, and stand in no need of learned labour to inculcate and explain them; they are rather matter of feeling, than of reasoning.

"Whatever is within, whatever is without us, calls aloud for a SAVIOUR. Change, corruption, distemperature and death, have by the sin of fallen angels, and of fallen man, been unhappily introduced into this system of things which we inhabit. The whole creation groaneth; and animals and vegetables, and even the Immortal Image of God himself in man, are all in bondage to their malign influences; so that every thing cries out, with the apostle Paul, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" so that every thing cries out, with the apostle Peter, "Lord, save me, or I perish!"

"What kind of a Saviour then is it, for whom all nature thus cries aloud, through all her works? Not a dry moralist, a legislator of bare external precepts, such as some would represent CHRIST to be: no, the
existence

existence and influence of the REDEEMER OF NATURE, must, at least, be as extensive as Nature herself. Things are defiled and corrupted throughout; they are distempered and devoted to death, from the inmost essence of their being; and none, but HE alone, "in whom they live, and move, and have their being," can possibly redeem and restore them."

These are inevitable truths, which all men, at some time or other, must feel, and feel deeply too, whether they attend to them now or not. The redemption and restoration of every sinner can be accomplished in no other way, than by CHRIST'S spiritual entrance into his heart, awakening in him an abhorrence of evil, and a love of goodness.

This is the spirit of the GOSPEL OF JESUS; this the grand purpose of Heaven, under every dispensation of Revealed Truth, from Adam down to this day. The modes of communication, the outward forms of worship and of doctrine, may vary; but the same spirit runs through the whole; and the enlightened eye of "Wisdom's children" can see and adore her radiant footsteps, in paths that appear dark and dreary to the eyes of others. However her outward garb may change; whatever different appearances she may put on, under the patriarchal, legal, and evangelical dispensations; her real features, her whole person and employment, have ever been invariably the same. These different appearances were only adapted to the different circumstances of men, and calculated to direct their attention to the one great and principal object she has always had in view, even the Redemption of immortal spirits from the tyranny of earth and hell, and the full restoration of them to their primeval innocence and bliss.

Turn then, ye advocates of infidelity ! O turn back from those delusive dangerous paths, into which the false light of fallen reason hath led your wayward steps. Wisdom herself, and all her true and Heaven-born children, lift up their sweet and instructive voices, and press you to return ; to recognize your illustrious origin ; to spurn the transitory and polluting joys of earth, and to aspire after the pure and permanent pleasures of Heaven ! From the Throne of the Most-High, the center of her enlightened kingdom, she speaks, she illuminates, she warms every intelligent being that turns to her benignant ray : the darkness of nature kindles, at her approach, into the Light and Life of Heaven ; every evil principle, every evil passion, shrinks from before her, and retires to its native hell ; whilst the spirits of her redeemed children issue forth from their long captivity, and triumphantly re-enter the realms of purity and peace.

Who would not wish, then, to become a votary, a pupil, a child of Wisdom ? But how is this privilege to be attained ? what path must we pursue, that will lead us to her delightful mansion ? what conduct must we observe, that will entitle us to be members of her illustrious household ? Must we put on the raiment of camel's hair, and the leathern girdle ; follow the mortified Baptist into the desert, and feed upon locusts and wild honey ? Or must we not rather adopt the gentler manners of the HOLY JESUS, mix with the world as he did, and cheerfully employ ourselves in acts of kindness and brotherly love ?

It is evident from the whole passage of Scripture, of which my text is part, that our Lord blames the Jews no less for their disregard of the ministry of John, than for the contempt with which they treated himself ; and plainly intimates, that by the Children of
Wisdom,

Wisdom, we are to understand all those who see the Baptist's ministry in its true point of view, viz. as introductory and preparatory to his own; and in consequence of this are fully convinced, that the cheerfulness of Faith and the sweetness and condescension of Love, must naturally be preceded by the severity of Repentance, and the salutary bitterness of sorrow and contrition.

“ Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” said the Harbinger of the SON OF GOD :
“ The Kingdom of God is come ; he that believeth shall be saved ;” said the SON OF GOD himself.
“ Repentance, therefore, and Faith working by Love,” are the sure characteristics of Wisdom's Children.

It is not, therefore, any distinguishing peculiarity of the Baptist's character, the outward garb or the outward deportment, that we are to assume, but an inward temper and frame of mind corresponding to both. A deep sensibility of the evils and infirmities of our fallen nature, an heart-felt conviction of the guilt and misery of sin, and a penitential sorrow for our own numberless lapses and deviations from the path of virtue, are the true Harbingers of CHRIST in our hearts. When, under their powerful ministration, we find ourselves called, not perhaps to a life of outward solitude and mortification, but of inward retirement and abstraction from the world ; in the language of Scripture, “ we repent, we are converted :” we turn our backs upon every gay and glittering scene, which worldly honour, wealth, or pleasure, can exhibit ; we find nothing in any of them, that can give a moment's real peace or rest to our “ weary heavy laden” souls ; we are humbled to the dust ; we feel ourselves,

ourselves, as "worms, and not men," as "less than
"the least of God's mercies."

In this mortified, penitent, and afflicted state, which is mercifully intended to bring us to a proper sense of our helplessness by nature, and of the indispensable necessity of Divine Supernatural assistance, we must remain, till the happy effect is produced, and till God is graciously pleased to call us out of the wilderness. The Harbinger then hath fulfilled his office; "The Lamb of God" appears "to take away the sins of the world;" "The kingdom of heaven is come" into our hearts. To sorrow and disquietude, succeed sweet peace and heavenly composure of mind: the understanding is enlightened; the will receives a new and happy direction; a new principle animates our whole frame, a new conduct appears in our whole life and conversation: the Spirit of Love breathes and acts in every duty we are called to perform, in every little office, which common civility and politeness requires us to do, even to those, who have yet no taste or desire for the sublime comforts of religion.

Thus it is, that Wisdom is justified of all her Children; and thus it appears, that the Religion of the Gospel, which is the only True Wisdom, is a RELIGION OF LOVE. A LIFE OF LOVE, therefore, is the best, the only evidence, which its disciples can give, of the sincerity of their profession; and the surest method they can take of recommending it to others. "Let your light, then, so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

DISCOURSE II.
EVANGELICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS!

JEREM. CHAP. xxiii. Part of VER. 6.

“AND THIS IS HIS NAME, WHEREBY HE SHALL
“BE CALLED, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUS-
“NESS.”

THE great and essential distinction betwixt the legal and evangelical dispensation, is accurately pointed out by the Apostle, where he tells us, that “the law is but the shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.” Its types, ceremonies, and outward ordinances, are taken from the objects of temporal nature, which are, at best, but shadowy representations of Eternal Truth. “The comers thereunto could never be perfected,” by the most minute observation of its external rites. The pious, spiritual Jew, therefore, would look further than these, and would consider every outward purification, as figuratively expressive of an inward cleansing to be performed in his heart.

Moses, their inspired legislator, and the prophets that succeeded him, did not fail to acquaint them with the immediate and necessary reference of these temporal symbols to Spiritual and Eternal Truths. Nevertheless, it appears but too evident, from the whole

whole Jewish history, that the generality rested their hopes of salvation, merely upon their outward law: "They went about to establish a righteousness of their own," founded upon a strict observance of the Levitical ceremonies, which were only adapted to their present circumstances, without paying the least attention to that Inward Law of Righteousness, to which these ceremonies referred.

Hence it was, that their prophets were directed by the Most High, to express, in the strongest terms, his disapprobation of those very ordinances, which he himself had originally instituted for their good; and to tell them, that "he had no pleasure in their burnt-offerings and sacrifices, that their oblations were vain, and that incense was an abomination in his sight." His displeasure was not with the ordinances themselves; for, if considered and observed with proper views and dispositions, they would have been subservient to the most glorious purposes: but he was offended with the gross and flagrant abuses of them, which the people were daily committing.

Hence also it was, that the same inspired prophets, when the hand of the Highest drew aside the curtain of futurity, and exhibited to their astonished view the successive displays of Gospel Light and Truth, with all that variety of heavenly scenery, which his INCARNATE SON was to open upon our benighted world; hence it was, I say, that the same inspired prophets were particularly careful to distinguish the new dispensation, by every figure and mode of expression, that might lead the most dark and ignorant Jew to consider it as internal and spiritual.

The righteousness of the new covenant is widely different from what the carnal Israelite apprehended to be

be the righteousness of the old. With respect to their essence, their foundation, their motives and ends, both covenants are the same, differing only in the external mode of revelation; the old one being "the shadow," the new, "the image of good things to come;" the old, pointing to CHRIST; the new, revealing him in all his fulness to the faithful.

CHRIST JESUS, therefore, is and must be, "the end of the law to those that believe; that is, he is and must be, in himself, that very Righteousness to which the law pointed, but which it could not attain. "As a school master," it served to instruct its ignorant, dark, and fallen pupils, in the outward rudiments of Divine Truth; but could never communicate to them the Light, Life, and Spirit of that real Evangelical Righteousness, which is only to be found in the INCARNATE WORD OF GOD.

It is for this reason, that the prophet, speaking of the approaching kingdom of the MESSIAH, in whom all the law and the prophets were to center, represents him as "a righteous branch springing forth from the root of David; as a king, reigning, prospering, and executing judgment and justice on the earth;" in consequence of whose mild and equitable administration, "Judah should be saved, and Israel should dwell safely:" and as the most characteristical designation of his nature and office, tells us, that "This is his NAME, whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Let us then enquire, in the first place, why our BLESSED REDEEMER has the name of RIGHTEOUSNESS ascribed to him by the prophet; and secondly, what we are to understand by his being called "OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

I. A name in Scripture is generally put to express the intrinsic nature and qualities of the object named. When, therefore, the name of the MESSIAH is here said to be "Righteousness," we must necessarily conclude, that Righteousness is his very nature, his essence, the substance of all his attributes and perfections. He is not called righteous, but **RIGHTEOUSNESS** itself; the source and fountain, from whence all that is really and truly righteous, throughout the universe, perpetually proceeds.

JESUS CHRIST is "the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the Express Image of his Person." All the beauties, excellencies, powers, and virtues, which are essentially hidden in the invisible GODHEAD, are substantially, vitally, inwardly, as well as outwardly, opened, revealed, and illustriously displayed, in the person of the INCARNATE JESUS. "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made:" all the "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers," possessed by angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, are derived from him; for, "in, and through him, did the Father create all things." The highest degree of Righteousness which the highest Seraph can attain, is but a beam or efflux from this Eternal Sun. With glory undiminished he perpetually imparts spiritual life and vigour to all those countless myriads of intelligences, which inhabit the whole compass of universal nature. He is himself the living law, the eternal rule of order and rectitude. GOD THE FATHER hath "set his King of Righteousness on his holy hill of Sion." Every outward institute, revealed and written, which GOD hath "at sundry times and in diversmanners," delivered to the sons of men, was but a transcript of that original law, which lives for ever in the heart of CHRIST. "I am the way, the truth,
" and

“ and the life ;” “ no man cometh unto the Father,
“ but by me ; ye will not come unto me, that ye
“ may have life ; without me, ye can do nothing—”
are his own blessed words.

Nature, without this CHRIST OF GOD is impurity, emptiness, poverty, want, and wretchedness extreme : nature illuminated, enriched, refreshed, glorified by him, is holy, righteous, lovely, supremely happy. Known or unknown to our fallen race, it is he alone, who inspires every good thought, every righteous deed, every sentiment and action that is amiable and endearing.

In the acts of the apostles we read of an altar with this inscription, “ To the unknown God !” St. Paul, taking occasion from this circumstance, tells the Athenians, “ Him whom ye ignorantly worship, “ preach I unto you.” In the whole frame of nature, says a truly sublime writer, every heart, every creature, every affection, every action, is an altar with the same kind of inscription, “ To the unknown Beauty ! “ —To the unknown Righteousness !—To the unknown JESUS !” This is the eternal standard of truth, order, righteousness and perfection, to which every being in nature ignorantly moveth ; this is that which all understandings, all hearts, cannot but admire and adore. But blessed above all beings are those, whose hearts are spiritual altars, with the righteous person of CHRIST engraven upon them by the finger of GOD, flaming with the fire of heavenly Love, and bearing this radiant inscription, “ To the “ known and experienced Beauty and Righteousness “ of that JESUS, whom we know ; that Word of “ Life, which our eyes have seen, our ears have “ heard, our hands have handled, and spiritually embraced !” And this leads me, in the second place,

to enquire what we are to understand by CHRIST's being called "OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

II. Under my first head, I observed to you from Scripture, that God created all things "in and by JESUS CHRIST;" and that "without him, was not any thing made that was made" Man, in particular, was "created in the Image of God:" CHRIST is "the Brightness of the Father's Glory," and the Express Image of his Person:" and, therefore, man was created in CHRIST.

Man in himself, in his outward nature, was but an empty vessel, till the CHRIST of God became his fulness and perfection. His outward form was from the dust of the earth; but his inward spirit was the breath of the MOST HIGH. The Image of GOD, even CHRIST himself, was his first, his sole Righteousness and perfection; the infallible instructor and enlightener of his understanding, the unerring guide and director of his will. The name by which the SON of GOD was known to him, was "The Lord his Righteousness." Angels themselves know no other Righteousness, than the Righteousness of GOD in CHRIST.

The fall of man, or "Original sin," (as our church article with great truth and propriety expresses it) "is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil." We have already seen what this original righteousness was, which man possessed in a state of innocence, viz. that it was CHRIST, "the Lord his Righteousness," in him. This is what Adam lost—This is what CHRIST alone can restore.

Man

Man in his present fallen state, without CHRIST, must be naturally inclined to evil: he has no righteousness of his own. And he can no more be saved by any exertion of his own natural powers, than he can see by the utmost stretch of his organs of sight, without the light of the sun.

Here then a serious and inquiring mind may be ready to ask—How is this BLESSED REDEEMER to become my Righteousness? I feel the force of these Scripture truths you have mentioned, and experience in my soul the dreadful consequences of an original apostacy—But I know not, whether CHRIST is my Righteousness, or not. I know not, whether I have the least traces of his Righteous Image in my soul.

“Hath CHRIST, then, been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known him?” Every little rebuke of conscience; every emotion of kindness, tenderness, and love; every sympathetic feeling of the prosperity or distress of thy neighbour; every sensibility of admiration, esteem, and joy, from contemplating a truly wise and virtuous character; every fervent desire of imitating what is good and excellent in others; every weak aspiration after holiness and perfection; nay, every little feeling of the restless cravings of thine own nature, every little longing after happiness unpossessed; all, all is CHRIST, speaking within thee, and waiting and watching to reveal himself in Righteousness to thy soul. Nothing, therefore, is wanting, on thy part, but a calm and quiet resignation of thyself, and all that is within thee, to his sovereign disposal, to redeem, purify, and restore, to do every thing that is necessary to be done, and which he alone can do, for thy salvation.

Thus

Thus have I endeavoured to give the plain and obvious meaning of the text. Distinctions upon distinctions have been multiplied; books upon books have been published, to tell us that we are to be justified by the Personal Righteousness of CHRIST outwardly imputed, and sanctified by the inherent graces of the HOLY SPIRIT; that one must necessarily precede the other; and that we must be perfect in CHRIST by Justification, before we can have the least spark of Holiness by Sanctification. This is, indeed, travelling in the broad and popular road; and such kind of preaching might be to the "praise of men." Let systems be written upon systems, and comments upon comments; let preachers oppose preachers, and hearers wander after this or that form of godliness: but may Heaven in mercy preserve us from taking up our rest, or placing our dependence upon any thing less than an intimate and experimental knowledge of "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" revealing himself, with all his holy heavenly tempers, virtues, and dispositions, in our hearts! May we never rest satisfied with a nominal profession of Christianity, a nominal acquaintance with CHRIST, or a nominal remission of sins; for, surely, we are not warranted, by Scripture, to look upon ourselves as redeemed by CHRIST, and born again of him, till by a total purification, a complete deliverance from all the evil tempers and passions of our fallen life, he hath obtained a full and peaceable possession of our whole nature, erected his Throne of Righteousness in our hearts, and by the effectual working of his HOLY SPIRIT brought us to the "measure of the stature of that FULLNESS, which is in HIMSELF."

DIS-



DISCOURSE III.

THE RELIGION OF JESUS, THE ONLY SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

St. JOHN, CHAP. vi. VER. 66, 67, 68.

“ FROM THAT TIME, MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES
“ WENT BACK, AND WALKED NO MORE WITH
“ HIM. THEN SAID JESUS UNTO THE TWELVE,
“ WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY? THEN SIMON PE-
“ TER ANSWERED HIM, LORD! TO WHOM
“ SHALL WE GO? THOU HAST THE WORDS
“ OF ETERNAL LIFE.”

HAPPINESS is the great end and aim of all those restless pursuits in which mankind are perpetually engaged. The laborious peasant, and the contemplative philosopher; the man that wishes for wealth, and the man that possesseth it; the gay votary of worldly pleasure, and the gloomy tenant of the solitary cell, are alike industrious in exploring this hidden treasure. Their imaginations are ever upon the stretch after this something yet unknown. Their ideas of happiness indeed, as well as the means which they make use of to attain it, are as different as their prevailing tempers and inclinations. Whatever objects coincide with their present conceptions, those they esteem, and those they pursue, with all the eagerness of newly awakened desire. Deluded, however,

ever, by specious appearances, mistaken again and again in their choice of objects, loathing to-day what the pursued yesterday with ardour, chearful and confident in prospect, disappointed and melancholy in possession, they fondly rove from one scene of imaginary bliss to another, unable to rest on any with permanent satisfaction. They never once consider, that no finite objects can fill up the immense void of an immortal soul, no temporal enjoyments satisfy its boundless desires; and that nothing less than "life eternal" can afford an happiness commensurate to its eternal nature.

This is not mere theory or empty speculation. There is not one in this assembly, but could bear witness from experience to the melancholy fact. Was each of us to be asked, in a serious and solemn manner, Are you really happy? very few, I am afraid, if they would speak ingenuously, could answer in the affirmative. And yet, perhaps, most of us have attained, from time to time, what we once deemed the height of our wishes; and what we were then sure, if attained, would make us completely happy.

The child wishes for the employments and pleasures of youth; the youth longs to arrive at what he calls the freedom and independence of manhood: the man anxiously schemes and plots, and contrives, and labours and toils, and then wishes to see the success of his schemes, the accomplishment of his labours. His schemes turn out to his satisfaction; the end is obtained; the object is enjoyed: his bliss is consummate, to be sure; he cannot be happier—No such thing—New wants succeed; new schemes are formed; new pursuits, new labours, new anxieties and wishes, tread close upon each others heels. But where is his happiness all the while? Why he loses sight, at last,
of

of the grand and principal object, in the pursuit of which he had set out: failing of success in this, he foolishly adopts the means for the end; and perpetual care, toil, and vexation, are the wretched effects of his mistaken choice.

Thus, for instance, the covetous man grasps, and saves, and fills his coffers—for what? Not to make himself, his family, or his poor neighbours round him, happy with the fruits of his penurious efforts. No—he not only turns a deaf ear to the piercing cries of indigence, but grudges even his family the common necessities of life, and never parts with a farthing, without uttering some ridiculous complaint of the hardness of the times, and their want of economy. He saves therefore for the sake of saving; his heart is shut up in his chest with his beloved mammon, both alike inaccessible to the mild and soft approaches of kindness and liberality.

We cannot but shrink back with horror, from a character so odious and detestable as this. But the observation with which I set out, will hold equally true, when applied to any of those false paths, which men pursue in quest of happiness.

Pleasure and ambition will deceive them, as surely as avarice. Enjoyment in every instance may pall, but cannot satisfy the restless desire. Nor will it ever be satisfied, till the soul gets sight of the only true beatifying object in the universe, to which she can rise, and upon which she can rest, with the whole strength and energy of her immortal nature.

The light of another world, however, must open and irradiate her spiritual senses, before she can have the least glimpse of this supreme source of bliss. The

vanity and deception of all creaturely happiness must in some measure be unfolded to her view, before she can stretch one feeble thought towards Heaven; and she must be intimately convinced of the bondage of her fallen life, and the misery of her condition in this fallen world, before she can feel the force, or discern the spiritual depth of these expressions of St. Peter, "Lord! to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

There are many people, indeed, who though they are walking on in those very paths of error and delusion, which I have just mentioned, would fain have their conduct hallowed by some religious appearances. They begin with deceiving themselves, and then go on to deceive others. But, do what they will, they cannot wholly divest themselves of the feelings of truth and virtue. For they have within them a Spiritual Nature, that is continually striving, under the influences of its native Heaven, to get disengaged from the servitude of its corrupt companion. Call it by what name we please, conscience, the light of nature, common sense, common or preventing grace; or, as the Scripture denominates it, "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," "Christ in us the hope of glory, the Incorruptible Seed of the Word of God," (for, as Christians, I think we ought to prefer scriptural to philosophical terms; I say, call it by which ever of these names we like best, certain it is, that every man at times feels this Divine Power stirring within him, and endeavouring to awaken, reprove, inform, illuminate, and govern his life and actions.

Now it always happens, that the counsels of this Heavenly Monitor clash with and oppose the dictates of corrupt nature. At this contradiction, the passions
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are alarmed: they demand immediate gratification; and the trembling mortal dares not at once yield to their solicitations. A strong sensibility of the falsehood of their claim, is felt in his breast. Something must first be done, to stifle or quiet this uneasy sensation.

Avarice, he will say to himself, is criminal, it is true; but a well-timed parsimony is virtuous and commendable; and a good and prudent man will think himself in duty bound to provide for the future support of his children.

Sensual pleasure, vain mirth, and jovial company, are not quite consistent with the precepts of the Gospel of CHRIST: but a few innocent amusements can do no harm; and it is but in character for a Christian to be chearful.

The pursuits of ambition are diametrically opposite to that meekness and humility, which should characterize the disciple of the lowly JESUS: but posts of honour, and exalted stations, may enable a man to be of considerable service to his neighbours, and enlarge his sphere of usefulness.

Thus, every evil temper and inclination, wrath, hatred, revenge, envy, jealousy, &c. may cloath themselves in the garb of virtue. Men may first deceive themselves, by endeavouring to reconcile their criminal pursuits with the dictates of conscience; and then employ the same infernal arts, to deceive and impose upon others. It is with such masks as these, that hypocrites, pharisees, and all pretenders to true religion, step forth upon the stage of life, dare to enlist themselves under the standard of virtue, and even sometimes assume the rank and authority of commanders.

manders. But when they are summoned to the field of battle; when they are called upon, from within, or from without, to exert themselves against their spiritual adversaries, to assert the rights of Heaven, as well in themselves as in the world around them, to subdue the evil lusts and passions that tyrannize in their own breasts, or to engage with that bitter and malevolent spirit, who opposes the advancement of their Master's kingdom in the life and conduct of others; then it is, that the traitors drop their masks; they meanly desert the banner of the cross, openly disavow their pretensions to religion, and "deny the LORD that bought them." They shrink from the combat, honourable as it would have been for them to engage, and happy as they would have found themselves in the issue; and meanly barter away their salvation for a false peace, short in its continuance, and ending in woe and misery extreme. Like the cowardly disciples mentioned in my text, "they go back, and walk no more with their Master."

Doubtless these timid Israelites were alarmed at that heavenly discourse of the BLESSED JESUS, which we read in the preceding part of this chapter. The mysteries of his kingdom there delivered, were too refined for their gross conception. The nature, nourishment, and growth of the Inward and Spiritual Man, which is there indispensably required, militated too powerfully against their favourite passions and prejudices. Their high-blown hopes of future preferment in a temporal kingdom, were, by this spiritual address, entirely dissipated; and they were taught to seek and expect nothing from their Master, but what was opposite to the life, and spirit, and maxims of this world.

Alas!

Alas! how many apostates from the religion of JESUS, have imitated the conduct of these unworthy disciples? Past, as well as present times, afford too many melancholy examples of this kind. A temporizing spirit hath prevailed in almost all ages; and ecclesiastical history abounds with examples of its venomous influence upon the minds of men. The temporal prosperity of the church hath, in many instances, proved its ruin; and accessions of wealth and power have only served to increase its corruptions. Under the profession of a religion, which breathes nothing but purity, meekness, and benevolence, men have been actuated by all the diabolical passions, that ever inflamed the breasts of the most ignorant and unenlightened Pagans.

Wherever the external profession of Christianity hath been attended with any outward emoluments, its disciples have increased, and an outward shew of zeal for its advancement, hath not been wanting. This outward shew gives them but little trouble; and the hypocrite's garb, though cumbersome at first, is not only made light and convenient by custom, but even desirable for the profits and advantages it brings.

Whilst the BLESSED JESUS is distributing his bounty, and loaves and fishes multiply under his creating hand, he will never be without crouds of followers to partake of his royal munificence. Whilst he is riding in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, nothing is heard from every quarter, but "Hosannahs to the Son of David;" every one is ambitious of joining his train, and of being in the number of his adherents. But when the powers of this world confederate against him; when Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the whole nation of the Jews, rise up in arms, seize upon the innocent
victim,

victim, and drag him to condemnation, torture and death; then, indeed, his false friends appear in their proper colours; and, O melancholy truth! even his disciples "go back, and walk no more with him;" some of them deny him, and all fly and forsake him.

Let us not deceive ourselves, my brethren. It is not an outward profession of Christianity, or an outward zeal against its adversaries, that will stand us in any stead: all this may well enough consist with inward impurity, a worldly spirit, and an heart devoted to the service of sin. The great trial of our faith, the sure proof of the sincerity of our conversion, must be sought for in deeper exercises than these.

When storms arise, when dangers threaten, when inward and outward enemies attack our peace, when we cannot maintain our discipleship without the sacrifice of some darling passion of almost irresistible power, when we can walk no longer with our Master, without the loss of some considerable temporal advantages; when we are summoned by him to fly from the soft allurements of pleasure, to burst the bonds of avarice or ambition, to disclaim all dependence upon the world, ourselves, or any created being; in a word, "to forsake all, take up our cross, and follow him;" then, indeed, is our hour of trial! then the sincerity of our attachment to CHRIST, will be made manifest to ourselves, and to the world; and we shall learn to know assuredly, whether we are, or are not, of the number of those disciples, who "go back, and walk no more with him."

Therefore,

Therefore, O Christian, thy Beloved is then only thine, and thou art then only his, when thou canst abide with him in the darkness of the vale, as well as in the splendors of the mount; when thou canst walk with him in the wilderness, as well as on the plain; and when "neither tribulation, nor distress, nor trial, nor persecution, can separate thee from the LOVE of God, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD."

DIS-



DISCOURSE IV.

THE RELIGION OF JESUS, THE ONLY SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

St. JOHN, CHAP. vi. VER. 66, 67, 68.

“ FROM THAT TIME, MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES
“ WENT BACK, AND WALKED NO MORE WITH
“ HIM. THEN SAID JESUS UNTO THE TWELVE,
“ WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY? THEN SIMON PE-
“ TER ANSWERED HIM, LORD! TO WHOM
“ SHALL WE GO? THOU HAST THE WORDS
“ OF ETERNAL LIFE.”

THE motives which induced many of our Lord's first followers to withdraw themselves from his person, and wholly relinquish the connection they had formed with him and his disciples, I have explained in the preceding discourse. The erroneous conduct of mankind in general, their mistaken notions of happiness, the false and dangerous paths in which they pursue it, their delusive hopes and real disappointments; the palliative arts they make use of to reconcile their duty with their passions, and the various methods by which they deceive themselves as well as others, their hypocritical pretensions to religion, and the ways in which their deceptions are discovered, and their pharisaical professions unveiled, in a word, the genuine sources of that error and apostasy,

apostasy, into which the unworthy disciples mentioned in the text, as well as others who have since imitated their example, have sadly degenerated; all these particulars were suggested to my mind, from the consideration of these words of the evangelist, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

The tender and pathetic expostulation which this ungenerous conduct produced from the blessed lips of the common Friend and Saviour of Man, breathes such a spirit of love, kindness, and compassion, towards the souls of those whom he came to redeem, as cannot but claim our most serious and grateful attention. The deep concern he must have felt for such an instance of apostasy, added to his apprehensions of the fatal influence it might have upon his beloved Apostles, awakened in him all those innocent and delicate sensibilities, which, even in his human nature, were the genuine offspring of that ETERNAL Love to which he was essentially united.

Friendship, true friendship, is the HEAVEN-BORN OFFSPRING of Divine Charity. Heaven is her native country. In that pure and gentle element she lives and moves without constraint, free, chearful, delighting and delighted. If ever she deigns to associate with the sons of men, it is among the truly virtuous alone she can be found. She visits none but those, whose "conversation is in heaven," who have within them a birth congenial with her own, whose hearts and affections are governed by the Spirit of Love, and can only be wooed and won by correspondent tempers and characters. Her sacred name, indeed, is often prostituted to venal, base, and corrupt purposes. Her fair and beauteous garb is often worn by the votaries of avarice, pleasure, and ambition.

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Her sweet aspect, her mild and winning graces, her obliging and disinterested disposition, yea, even her peculiar warmth of affection, and glowing sensibility of heart, are all profanely counterfeited by the selfish and sensual, the vain and the aspiring.

Take it for granted, however, that man, whether gay, dissolute, covetous, or ambitious, is incapable of real friendship: all his designs and prospects center in himself, and every seeming act of kindness, every splendid appearance of courtesy and generosity, is calculated to promote some selfish purpose, to procure some temporal emolument.

Far different is the friendship of those who are "born of God;" who, from a vital union with the Source of Love, derive such pure and unadulterated streams of Charity into their breasts, as manifest themselves in a life of general beneficence towards all men, and a warm, affectionate, spiritual attachment towards "those especially who are of the household of faith." Such, but in the purest highest degree, were those heavenly feelings of true friendship, with which the heart of JESUS glowed, when he uttered this sweet and endearing exhortation, "Will ye also go away?"

The words are few, but the sentiments are manifold, gracious, and animating; and they cannot but appear so to those, who attend, with nice discernment, to the common feelings of human nature. It is to these common feelings that our Lord makes his appeal, in all his heavenly discourses.

Though, from the general corruption, it is a case that has but seldom occurred in the page of history, yet let us suppose a good and virtuous man, associated with

with a set of good and virtuous companions, bound to him by the strong and endearing ties of private friendship, in the defence of some good and virtuous cause. Novelty, the love of fame, a desire of appearing to the world in some conspicuous point of view, the prospect of some great temporal advantages, and a variety of other motives of a selfish nature, might suddenly prompt a considerable number of persons to join these champions of virtue, and follow them in the glorious enterprize. Enemies appear, dangers threaten; yea, death, perhaps, in all its horrors, presents itself to their view. Personal security is to be preferred before the general interest of virtue; and where virtue cannot be supported without personal losses, her cause must be abandoned. Upon these principles, the weak and timid multitude forsake their gallant leader. Attached to him by no bonds, but those of interest or ambition, when these fail, they think themselves at liberty to abandon his person and his cause. The noble chieftain, not so much affected with the prospect of danger to himself and his cause, as with a real concern for the baseness of his followers, and an apprehension, that their flight might perhaps intimidate those, whom he knew to be attached, from principle, to virtue and himself; the noble chieftain, I say, might with great propriety, and without the least tincture of fear or despondency, but rather as a trial of their fidelity, and a most powerful incentive to new and more vigorous efforts, address himself in such words to the chosen few, as those, which the great Captain of our Salvation delivered upon this occasion: "Will ye also go away?" In this address, there is not implied the least unkind suspicion of their integrity. It is no more than an affectionate appeal to the warm and tender sensations of true and genuine friendship.

O, my beloved Apostles! ye see the weakness, timidity, and worldly-mindedness of those pretended friends, who have hitherto associated with us. So violent hath been their attachment to earthly pursuits, that they would not suffer truths of the highest importance to interfere with them for a moment. My last spiritual address was too deep and powerful a stroke at their corruptions. Could they have continued in fellowship with us upon their own terms, and made their connection subservient to their own views of temporal interest, they would not have so suddenly forsaken us. But shall their conduct have the least influence upon yours? Will ye be intimidated by their flight? Will ye suffer your fidelity and perseverance to be shaken by their evil example? Will ye unkindly abandon a Master, into whose service ye entered upon the most disinterested principles, and who knows and feels you to be attached to him by the heavenly ties of religion and love? After having seen so many indubitable testimonies of that almighty power wherewith he is invested, will ye doubt his ability to protect and deliver you? After so many kind and instructive conversations, in the course of which he hath gradually, and as he found you "could bear them," opened to you the great truths of his spiritual kingdom; will ye be such enemies to yourselves, and your real happiness, as to forsake your best of friends, your kindest and most powerful protector? "Will ye also go away?"

These sentiments, and more than these, are expressed in this pathetic exhortation: and for our comfort, my brethren, may we ever recollect, that, though ascended into the highest heavens, and seated at the right hand of his Father, he continues the same loving conduct towards all his faithful friends and followers,

followers, that he observed towards his disciples whilst he was upon earth. The same gentle and affectionate modes of speech, the same tender, but awakening exhortations, to which his Apostles were accustomed, he still applies to the heart of every believer.

If we look back to past experience, we shall be convinced, that this very exhortation of our compassionate Master, hath frequently sounded in our ears. When the infectious influence of evil example, the sudden attack of some powerful temptation, some severe stroke of adversity, or some smiling prospect of temporal felicity; when these, or any of these, have secretly solicited our frail nature, to relinquish our religious pursuits, to surrender ourselves to the dominion of sin, and renounce the favour and protection of our Master; hath he not frequently, and with ineffable tenderness, whispered this gentle reprehension to our hearts, "Will ye also go away?" Happy, indeed, if, with Peter's affectionate warmth, and honest faithful adherence to our Lord, amidst the severest trials, we have been enabled to reply, from a full conviction of our own weakness, and of his all-sufficiency, "Lord! to whom shall we go? "Thou hast the words of Eternal Life."

Peter generally spoke in the name of all his brethren. His answer here, therefore, is to be considered as a solemn declaration on the part of the Apostles, of their firm trust and confidence in their Master, founded on the full evidence they had received of his Divinity. As if he had said:

Think not, dearest Master, that thy faithful disciples are actuated by such unworthy motives as have prompted some of their weak and carnal brethren to
forsake

forfake thee. No—we are intimately convinced of the folly of depending upon any creaturely strength, or seeking for happiness in any sublunary prospects. Thou hast opened upon our wandering souls such scenes of heavenly bliss, thou hast manifested to our outward senses such astonishing displays of thy absolute power over all temporal nature, thou hast revived our hearts with such sweet draughts of those rivers of pleasure that surround thy Father's throne, thou hast enlightened our understandings with such piercing beams of truth, thou hast placed such endearing objects before our will and affections, and hast so enamoured our souls with the beauty and excellency of thy Gospel, that we are perfectly satisfied to remain with thee for ever, implicitly to follow thy blessed footsteps, to accompany thee through all the difficulties and dangers of life, and even to meet death undaunted at thy side. Indeed, “to whom shall we “go?” Every creature around us bears the stamp of its own imperfection. Whatever they possess of beauty or of bliss, it is all from thee, thou Lord of life, and source of all perfection! They are in themselves, as poor and indigent as we are. If we make the experiment, and go to them in quest of happiness, our fond hopes are suddenly overthrown, and vexation succeeds to disappointment. The life we are now in, is fallen; temporal, and transient. The words of this life are as vain as the life itself: for it can only speak what it knows and feels, and the sum and substance of this is want and woe. But as thou hast in thyself the very source of eternal life, by virtue of thy eternal union with the Father; as the powers, sensibilities, virtues, and perfections of this life are completely opened in thee; as the “fulness of the “GODHEAD dwells bodily” in thee, so thy words must be the “words of eternal life:” for thou “speakest that thou dost know, and testifiest that
“thou

"thou hast seen." Thy outward words are, indeed, but the outward signs of this life eternal; the real participation of it can be nothing less than an inward and vital union of our wills with thine, effectually co-operating, and gradually "transforming us into "thine own image, from glory to glory."

Such was the import of the Apostle's reply; and such must be the real heart-felt language of every sinner, that expects peace and pardon at the hands of the Almighty. Pardon of sin, is not, as some vainly imagine, like the cancelling of a bond, the remitting of a debt, or the forgiveness of an injury betwixt man and man. No—It is a "dying unto sin, and a "rising again unto righteousness." It is life eternal opening itself in the fallen soul, and extinguishing the life of sin, or at least keeping it in due subjection, till the dissolution of the body puts an end to its connection with this fallen world; it is, according to the Apostle's language, "the law of the spirit of life "making us free from the law of sin and death."

That eternal life, which we have, and can have only from JESUS CHRIST, the second Adam, can alone pardon, remit, atone, cover, extinguish, (for all these are words of the same spiritual import) that earthly life, which we have received from the first Adam. The very first motion of this eternal life within us, is a conviction of the vanity, sin, and folly of our earthly life. "They that are whole need not "a physician, but they that are sick." A sensibility of want and weakness must necessarily precede a desire of relief: and the soul must be "weary and "heavy laden," oppressed beneath the burden of her fallen nature, and convinced of its inability to yield her a moment's real peace, before she will think of making this solemn enquiry, "what shall I do to be saved?"

“ saved ? to whom shall I go ? ” Yea, even after she is come thus far, many a weary step must be taken, many doubts and difficulties must be encountered, before she will be able, from her own experience, to adopt this declaration of the Apostle, “ Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

Those doubts and difficulties, with which men are frequently embarrassed in their spiritual researches, do in a great measure proceed from that general deviation from the primitive simplicity of Gospel Truth and Gospel Language, which so sadly prevails among the various denominations of Christians ; in consequence of which a multitude of useless and unscriptural distinctions have been introduced into catechisms, systems of divinity, and even books of practical devotion, which serve only to perplex and confound the minds of anxious and well disposed inquirers.

“ To whom shall I go ? ” cries the poor penitent sinner, whom CHRIST, by the Power of his Grace, hath brought to a sensibility of his fallen life. Why, go to the priest, says one ; confess, and get absolution, and you will come away as innocent as a newborn babe. Go, and study the Augsburg confession, says another, and you will soon have every doubt and difficulty removed. Go, says a third, and read Calvin’s system with great attention, and you will soon find your soul at rest. Some advise him to join himself to one sect of Christians, and some to another ; each maintaining, in his turn, that the life and power of religion is only to be found among those of his own particular society.

The poor misguided seeker eagerly catches at every thing that looks like spiritual advice ; runs from one book to another, from one church and conventicle to another

another, "seeking rest, but finding none," or at most, a temporary peace, a partial truce from extreme distress; whereas after all, a few plain words of Scripture, properly applied and attended to, will go further towards setting him right in his researches, than all the popes and priests, and Luthers, and Calvins, and sects and denominations in the world.

What then hath a minister of CHRIST, or indeed any private Christian, to say or do, when a true penitent under such circumstances applies to him for advice, and asks him with the utmost anxiety, "To whom shall I go?" What can he do, what can he say, that will have a more immediate tendency to fix his attention, and compose his distracted mind, than to answer him in the words of the text? "To whom shouldst thou go, but to JESUS CHRIST? it is he alone who hath the words of Eternal Life."

I know no other end of preaching but this; and I am sure, that we are warranted by Scripture to declare to every such humbled, penitent, and afflicted sinner, that if he thus seeks CHRIST, he shall not seek in vain. By faithfully directing his will and affections towards his REDEEMER, thus inwardly unfolding his graces and virtues in his heart, he will become more and more acquainted, and more and more comforted, with that "Life Eternal, which is the gift of GOD in CHRIST JESUS."



DISCOURSE V.

TRUE RELIGION, A COSTLY AND CONTINUAL SACRIFICE.

2 SAMUEL, CHAP. XXIV. VER. 24.

“ AND THE KING SAID UNTO ARAUNAH, NAY,
“ BUT I WILL SURELY BUY IT OF THEE AT A
“ PRICE ; NEITHER WILL I OFFER BURNT-
“ OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD MY GOD OF
“ THAT WHICH DOTHTH COST ME NOTHING.

THE preceding part of this chapter presents us with an awful and instructive example of the fatal consequences which result from an unbelief or distrust of the providential power and goodness of God. Contrary to the express command of the Almighty, contrary to the spirit of that dispensation, which inculcated an absolute and implicit reliance upon Heaven in all dangers and difficulties; yea, contrary to an happy experience of the most signal interpositions of Omnipotence ; David had rashly issued a commission to the general and officers of his host, to go through all the tribes of Israel, and take a particular and exact account of the numbers of his people. Such a flagrant instance of unfaithfulness to his God, after so many merciful deliverances received, drew upon him a most severe chastisement. To humble the haughtiness of his spirit, and convince him of the folly

folly of depending upon the arm of flesh, instead of taking the most HIGH GOD for his shield and defence, a messenger of vengeance was immediately sent forth. From Dan even to Beersheba, he marked his progress with carnage and desolation: seventy thousand men, within the space of a few hours, fell a sacrifice to the devouring pestilence. He soon reached the beloved city, and was preparing to pour his phial of wrath upon the mount of God. The eyes of the unhappy monarch were now opened: he saw the destroying angel, humbled himself in the dust, acknowledged his guilt, and deprecated the further progress of the contagion. "Lo I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done?" Omnipotence arrested the angel in his progress: "It is enough—stay now thine hand." And David was directed by the prophet Gad, to rear an altar unto the LORD, on the very spot where the pestilence had ceased. This spot was the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Deeply sensible of the greatness of his deliverance, the king immediately proceeded to execute the divine command. Araunah discovered him at a distance; and with all the submission of a conquered and tributary prince, hastened to meet him, and "bowed himself before the king on his face to the ground." "And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come unto his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing-floor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people." Araunah, as a king, with a princely generosity of spirit, immediately offered him, not only the threshing-floor, but also his oxen for the sacrifice, and his threshing instruments for wood. "And the king said unto Araunah, Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I

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" offer

“ offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD my God of
“ that which doth cost me nothing.” The plain and
obvious meaning of which is undoubtedly this :

Hath God favoured me with such an astonishing deliverance? Hath he manifested his goodness and loving-kindness in withdrawing his chastising hand, pardoning my guilt, and sparing me and my people from utter destruction? Surely, then, I will not grudge the trifling expence of erecting, upon this spot, a monument of his love. Surely I will not accept of the labours of another, or testify my gratitude by burnt-offerings and sacrifices at another's expence. The least I can do is, to make such an acknowledgement, and in such a manner, as will best evidence my sense of the obligation, and the honour that is due to my Almighty Deliverer.

Those who look beyond the letter and the outward history, will readily discern the state of David's mind. They will readily discern this outward action of his, though adapted to the outward dispensation under which he lived, to be highly expressive of that great and fundamental principle, which every dispensation of Truth, from the fall of man down to this very day, hath strongly inculcated, viz. that true religion is an inward life, that cannot rest in external appearances, but manifests itself in an absolute unlimited surrender of the whole man to his Creator. This can never be accomplished without considerable cost and expence on the part of the creature, inasmuch as his will and affections must first be drawn off from all that variety of imaginations, desires and enjoyments, to which his fallen nature strongly allures, and deeply enslaves him.

Hence

Hence it is that our BLESSED LORD makes the very first duty of discipleship to consist in "denying" ourselves, taking up our cross, and following him:" that is to say, in bearing, with meekness, the necessary evils of our fallen life, resisting and overcoming its sinful suggestions, and humbly waiting for and co-operating with his Spirit revealed in our hearts.

This is the spiritual warfare, the struggle betwixt the "law in the members," and the "law of the mind;" the fighting "not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers," in which contest we are all summoned to engage. The whole burnt-offering and sacrifice, the whole price which this must cost us, is nothing less than the turning our wills, with the whole tide of our affections, from the evil to the good principle within us. And that God through CHRIST hath given us ability to do this, will appear from the following considerations.

The will of man, as coming forth from the Eternal Will of God, must be eternally and essentially free. The will of the fallen angels in hell, was as free as that of the highest archangel now in heaven:

Freely they stood, who stood; and fell, who fell.

The whole difference betwixt them consists in this, that the will of those who fell, is freely turned to evil; the will of those who stood, is freely turned to God and Goodness.

Man stands in an intermediate state, betwixt light and darkness, betwixt life and death, betwixt heaven and hell. The whole tenor of Scripture, from beginning to end, represents him in this critical situation; represents

represents his Heavenly Father, as calling to him and inviting him to "eschew evil, and to do good;" to "love light rather than darkness;" to "come to him, that he may have life." All which certainly implies, that God, by his Grace, hath given him a power of choosing, and has made his salvation or destruction to proceed from himself, and not from any predetermining divine decree.

JESUS CHRIST is always spoken of, as a freely given Saviour; but salvation, as "a treasure to be purchased, as a race to be run, as a battle to be fought, as a work to be accomplished, even with fear and trembling." The power or capacity of being saved, the whole merit of salvation, comes from CHRIST; the using of this power, the availing ourselves of this merit, from ourselves. "Why WILL YE die, O house of Israel? TURN YOURSELVES, and live ye. YE WILL NOT come to me, that ye might have life. How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye WOULD NOT."

Upon this principle of forsaking sin, and turning our will to Goodness, are founded all those Gospel precepts, which speak of "crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, destroying the old man, dying to sin, suffering with CHRIST, cutting off a right hand, plucking out a right eye, passing through much tribulation;" all which plainly shew, that True Religion is a perpetual sacrifice; and that this sacrifice cannot be "offered to the LORD our GOD, of that which doth cost us nothing;" that the price will be far more, than "fifty shekels of silver," the purchase of Araunah's threshing-floor and implements; yea, that it will be no less than the "whole body of sin," which we carry about us, with
all

all its affections and lusts; which we must, with meekness and humility, surrender to our BLESSED REDEEMER, to be burnt up and consumed upon the fire of his altar.

Having thus endeavoured to establish this fundamental principle, that "true religion is a costly and a perpetual sacrifice;" let us now, to prevent any dangerous deception, turn our eyes to those false appearances of it, which we frequently meet with in the world, which are very easily assumed, and which cost nothing.

The man of moral honesty first steps forth, and puts in his claim to the character of religious. He looks upon any Revelation from Heaven to be quite unnecessary; and with all the forwardness and presumption of his own blind reason, pronounces those books, which Christians believe to be of Divine Authority, to be idle and chimerical. His religion, he will tell you, is, "to do as you would be done by." Poor man! it were well, if he even practised this golden rule; it might lead him to something further; for, by endeavouring to fulfil this, he might be brought to a view and feeling of his own natural inability; of the evil tempers and passions of his soul, which, in innumerable instances, hurry him on to do to others, what he would, by no means, have them to do to him. His religion, therefore, is properly visionary. Every thing to him is just and right, that comes within those bounds of honesty, which have been fixed by the laws of the land. A right life is not, with him, a right principle in the heart, but only a set of outward actions, that in the eyes of the world give him the character of an honest man.

The

The religion of such a person "costs him nothing." He has nothing to sacrifice, but much to gain by the practice of it; at least, much of worldly happiness; for he can have no idea of any other. Being wholly destitute of all sensibility with respect to the evil of his fallen life, he is not in the least desirous of purchasing a better, at the price it will cost. Before he can form any conception of the necessity of religion, as a real inward change and renewal of heart, he must first be made sensible of his present error and misery: "for they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Next comes the nominal Christian, who hath been baptized, and professes to believe the great truths of the Gospel, and joins with some publick assembly of Christians in outward worship. Surely his claim to the religious character, hath a better foundation than the preceding one: he purchases it at an higher price; it costs him more to support it. He neglects no outward duty, either moral or instituted; you never miss him at church, or at the sacrament: he hath been strictly educated from his infancy; he is sober, virtuous, kind, and charitable. In a word, he appears to be, what it were to be wished every man in the world really was. Thus far he is undoubtedly right: a strict observance of all the outward duties of religion, a minute attention to things in themselves indifferent, and a prudent abstaining from every appearance of evil, are doubtless incumbent, even upon those who have made the greatest progress in the Divine Life.

Let us, however, remember, that this outward strictness will avail little, without a conformity of our inward man to the temper and disposition of CHRIST; without being "born again," and commencing a new life, even a life of Heaven upon earth. The nominal
Christian

Christian is a stranger to this blessed process. Talk to him of the necessity of regeneration, of doing all that he does from a principle of Divine Love, and with a view to God's glory, and not to any self-satisfaction, and he will not understand you. His round of duties seems to be the God whom he worships; at least, he makes them the *opus operatum*. He is never tormented with spiritual doubts and temptations; he knows nothing of the severe conflicts which real Christians sustain, and the dreadful pangs they must suffer, before their purification is accomplished; before they can "bow their heads," with the great Captain of their Salvation, and say with him, "It is finished." He is willing to go to Heaven by an easier and less thorny path, and to purchase glory at a cheaper rate.

The last I shall mention, but the most specious appearances of religion, are those which are exhibited by the pharisaical professors of Christianity. And here I would willingly throw a veil over those follies and extravagancies, to which false enthusiasm frequently gives the name of spiritual exercises and experiences. But my duty calls upon me to put you on your guard against these delusive appearances; as I cannot but think, that spiritual pride, or an over-weening conceit and forward exhibition of our own fancied spiritual attainments, is the most fatal rock, upon which the Christian can make "shipwreck of his faith."

In an age, wherein every appearance of religion ought to be encouraged and promoted, it is melancholy to think, that we should be under a necessity of speaking even against some appearances. But that you may form a right notion of what I mean by a pharisaical profession of religion, I will endeavour to draw the character of a modern Pharisee.

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In

In the first place, he is one, who talks much in a religious strain, but takes care to make himself the chief subject of conversation: His own illuminations and experiences, his conviction and conversion, with all the particular circumstances attending them, he never fails to communicate, without distinction, to all those who will give him an hearing; and to communicate in such a manner, as to let them know, that he considers his own as the infallible standard by which he measures the experiences of others.

In the next place, you will generally find him insisting upon points of controversy, rather than those of practice; urging your assent to such and such articles of his faith, calling upon you to apply for instruction to some favourite Rabbi of his own sect, or some favourite system which himself has adopted, instead of sending you immediately to him, who is the Fountain of all Wisdom, and "who giveth it liberally" to those that ask it of him.

You will find him careful to "pay tithes of mint and annise, and cummin;" to go to what he calls a gospel-sermon, though he should neglect the necessary duties of his occupation; and to spend hours in talking about religion, whilst he passes by "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith." Tell him of the necessity "of dying daily to sin, of suffering with CHRIST, of mortifying the flesh, denying himself, cutting off a right hand, &c." he will answer you, that his peace is made, that his sins are pardoned, that he has a full assurance of everlasting life. Tell him of the necessity of being "born again," of having the righteous nature, temper, and disposition of the HOLY JESUS in his heart; he will reply, that he knows of no righteousness but that of CHRIST imputed, and that his Saviour's personal

sonal obedience is accepted by God instead of his own; and though he may not go so far as to deny the great doctrine of sanctification, but will even allow and insist upon it, yet it is such a sanctification, as will turn to very little account. For, who that looks upon his work as already done, will chuse to labour any longer? Who that believes his sins to be already pardoned, will think it necessary to implore the forgiveness of God, or to obtain the healing influences of the Spirit of Grace?

In a word, if we may judge from his conversation, he thinks himself perfect—if we may judge from his actions, he is indeed very far from it. He shews the uttermost bitterness against every one that happens to dissent from his opinion; and looks upon all those as carnal and unregenerate, who do not walk in his footsteps. Meekness, humility, benevolence and charity, the most characteristical graces of the true disciples of Jesus, are not to be found in any part of his conduct. His life, therefore, is not in CHRIST, but in a set of doctrines and opinions, supported by a “zeal that is not according to knowledge.” Till he is taught to see his own pride and presumption; till he discovers, and strives to eradicate the selfish principle that lurks at the centre of his heart; he cannot be said to offer any other sacrifices to God, than such as “cost him nothing.”

To conclude: Having seen what those real sacrifices of religion are, which will be acceptable to God, and in how many instances men deceive themselves, and others, by false appearances; let us determine to judge of our acquaintance with and progress in True Religion, not merely by outward observances, nor yet by any transient fits or lively and pleasant frames of devotion; but rather by the discovery

which God is pleased to make to us of our weakness and misery, by our sincere desire of being united to CHRIST, and in heart and spirit assimilated to his nature. Thus having followed a Suffering Master, "travelling in the greatness of his strength," through the ensanguined paths of a spiritual warfare, we shall at length "come forth out of great tribulation;" and, having "washed our robes in the Blood of the Lamb," shall be partakers of his triumphs, and receive the accomplishment of his great and glorious promise, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

DIS-



DISCOURSE VI.

TRUTH, THE ONLY FRIEND OF MAN.

GALATIANS, CHAP. IV. VER. 16.

“AM I THEREFORE BECOME YOUR ENEMY, BE-
“ CAUSE I TELL YOU THE TRUTH?”

MEN are generally too apt to consider religion as unfriendly to their happiness, and incapable of yielding them any satisfactions, equal to those which they derive from the pursuit of worldly objects. Hence, the aversion to exercises of piety, and the society and conversation of the good and virtuous. Hence, the listlessness and unconcern about the state of their souls, whilst the whole attention of their minds, their thoughts, their desires and affections, their hands and their hearts, are all busily and constantly employed, in making provision for the support, ornament, and gratification of a perishing body. Surely, such a strange conduct as this, must proceed from a secret persuasion, that religion will interrupt their pursuit of some present favourite objects, and damp and deaden all the sprightliness of enjoyment. Were they, indeed, charged with holding such principles as these, they would doubtless take it exceedingly amiss; and look upon that man as their enemy, who should presume thus to arraign their conduct, and ascribe it to motives, which they would blush to own.

The

The tender and affectionate expostulation in my text, is evidently founded upon an intimate knowledge of human nature. The sagacious Apostle readily discovered the secret workings of pride and disgust, in the hearts of his Galatian converts. After having expressed his astonishment, that "they were" so soon removed from him, that called them into "the Grace of CHRIST, unto another Gospel;" after having charged them with folly, for suffering themselves to be "bewitched," as he expresses it, by the artifices of deceivers; after having declared his fears and apprehensions, lest he should have bestowed upon them labour in vain; and, after having enumerated some former testimonies of their reciprocal regard and affection for each other; he, at length, addresses himself to their consciences, and solemnly calls upon them to declare, whether they could, with the least justice or propriety, change their former sentiments of him, or deem him unfriendly to their best interests, "because he told them the Truth;" because, by his Christian and apostolical reprehensions, he sought to rescue them from the dominion of passion and prejudice: "Am I therefore become your enemy, "because I tell you the Truth?"

One would think, that such well-meant remonstrances, from the ministers of Truth and friends of Virtue, would be kindly received, and have a salutary influence upon the hearts of sinners; but experience, alas! tells us the contrary. There have been many instances, and some, perhaps, within our own personal knowledge, in which resentment, rather than gratitude, hath been awakened by such expostulations; and, instead of humbling the spirit, they have produced a reply that bore the marks of passion, checked and disappointed in its favourite pursuits.

Considered

Considered with respect to the real state of his soul, every man, who lives under the dominion of any evil passion, or suffers himself to be drawn aside from the paths of virtue by the delusive arts of vice, is doubtless in a situation similar to that of these Galatians. For though his passions and prejudices may not be exactly the same, yet they proceed from the same source, and enmity to God and Goodness is at the bottom.

But, blessed be God! there are no Galatians without an Apostle; no sinner without an higher messenger of God than St. Paul; a greater witness, and more awful reprover of his evil ways; a friend that speaks to him at all times and seasons, in the hurry of the day, and the silence of the night, amidst the anxiety of expectation, and the ardour of possession, vigorously remonstrating against every sinful suggestion, and sharply censuring and reproofing the mind for every sinful act.

The fallen spirit of man, it is true, brooks not the frequent appearance of this Heavenly Messenger; but, as the Apostle says of the Galatians, treats him as an enemy, and replies to all his friendly remonstrances and affectionate warnings, with indignation and disdain. "Go thy way for this time," was the language of voluptuous greatness to the same blessed Apostle. "Go thy way for this time," is still the language of every unconverted heart, when it is checked or interrupted in its vicious and lawless pursuits, by the voice of this Inward Monitor—Why art thou perpetually intruding upon my hours of business, pleasure, or repose, and teizing and disquieting me with thine ill-timed admonitions or rebukes?

Who

Who amongst us, let me ask, hath not, in innumerable instances, given such a rash and impatient answer to the Servant of God within us? When some darling passion hath importunately solicited for immediate indulgence; some pretty fantastical object presented itself to our desires; some impetuous call of pride, envy, covetousness, or resentment, demanded an immediate answer; have we not, though we were, at the very instant, warned against the artifice and delusion, by this constant and inseparable Friend, have we not petulantly rejected his counsel, bid him "away for that time" at least, and treated him with more contempt than we would dare to shew to a real earthly enemy?

His meekness, however, is not discomposed by our rising wrath; his fortitude is not daunted by our repeated insults; his persevering love is not in the least abated by the stubbornness and obduracy of our hearts. He still keeps close to our side, accompanies us whithersoever we go, and, "whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear," ceases not, at one time, to whisper to us in the soft language of heavenly instruction; and, at another, to thunder in our ears the most alarming reproofs and menaces

But who is this Apostle, this Messenger of God, this Inward Witness and Monitor, whom deluded mortals are so apt to consider as an enemy to their peace?—Hear, O sinner, and let thy face be covered with confusion! let thine hard heart break with deep compunction for its past obduracy, whilst thou art told, that this enemy as thou hast hitherto deemed and treated him, is no other than the ETERNAL SPIRIT OF THY GOD AND THY REDEEMER, who, by continually opposing the language of truth to the suggestions of error, hath been endeavouring to emancipate

emancipate thy soul from its grievous bondage, and to bring it forth into a state of light and liberty.

Thou hast mistaken death for life, misery for happiness, time for eternity! Thy will and affections have been fixed upon objects of unreal bliss; turned from thy GOD, the true and only source of Goodness and Happiness, and working evil in the element of sin and darkness! Spirits thus employed must mingle with congenial spirits: there is "no communion of CHRIST with Belial;" no fellowship or likeness betwixt thy spirit in such a state as this, and the Spirit of thy REDEEMER. He appears, and cannot but appear to thee, as thine enemy, because the truth he tells thee militates against thy darling lusts, and shews thee those dark destructive purposes, which, because thou canst hide them from others, thou wishest also to hide from thyself.

But this seeming enemy is, indeed, thy real friend. He is only pursuing thee with his internal counsels and reproofs, that he may snatch thee out of the hands of the destroyer; that he may call thee out of thy present "darkness, into his own marvellous light." When thou hast experienced this blessed change, reconciliation will soon take place; an union of spirits will commence betwixt thy SAVIOUR and thee; and thou wilt gradually grow into his Image and Likeness, till thou art made perfect in his Love.

Believe me, my brethren, till this great change hath passed upon our souls, till we begin to feel, and admire, and love the communications of this inward friend and comforter, we must be strangers to true peace of mind, and totally ignorant of the proper enjoyment of ourselves, and the proper use of the world in which we now sojourn.

In our natural state, all is darkness, disorder, and disquietude. We see every thing through a false medium. We are under a spiritual delirium. Our heavenly physician is endeavouring, by the methods I have just mentioned, to restore our health of mind, to open our spiritual senses, to give us a clear and distinct view of "the things that belong to our peace." We must, therefore, co-operate with his "labours of love." Even the severity of his applications proves him to be our friend; for he knows that, without them, we can never come to a "right mind." Let us, then, recollect, how often these applications have been made; how often, through inattention and neglect, they have failed of success; how often we have slighted his counsels, despised his prescriptions, and cast his medicines from us. But let us also remember, that there is a time at hand, when, light as we may think of such a blessing now, we shall most ardently long for his support and consolation. When languishing with sickness, and oppressed with pain, it is he alone who can soften our pillow, and supply us with inward strength; when tottering with age, and bowed down with infirmities, it is he alone who can be our rod and staff; and when the lamp of life is so near expiring, that we can scarcely see our passage to the verge of time, it is he alone that can light up the Lamp of God in our hearts, and conduct us through the dark valley of the shadow of death, to the bright confines of a celestial world.

In a word, if the enmity is not destroyed in our souls in this life, we must necessarily carry it with us into the next. And to those who die under the dominion of a fallen life and sinful nature, "our God must be a consuming fire."

Let

Let us lay these things seriously to heart. Let us earnestly seek Reconciliation with GOD THROUGH CHRIST, and endeavour to perfect ourselves in the great work of Peace and Love, "whilst it is day; because the night cometh, when no man can work."

DISCOURSE VII.

THE STRENGTH AND VICTORY OF FAITH.

I JOHN, CHAP. V. VER. 4.

“WHATSOEVER IS BORN OF GOD OVERCOMETH
“THE WORLD; AND THIS IS THE VICTORY
“THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, EVEN
“OUR FAITH.”

ALL the doctrines of our most Holy Religion conspire to inform us, that the supreme happiness of man is not to be attained without unnumbered labours and conflicts; and all its precepts are calculated to inforce a perpetual activity, and unwearied perseverance, in the “pursuit of the things that belong to our peace.”

“The Devil, the world, and the flesh,” are the great adversaries, who are continually plotting our ruin. The flesh, by which is meant that corrupt nature which we bring with us into the world, is ever harassing us with its impure suggestions: “the Devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour:” and the world, by which we are to understand that fallen state of things, in which we at present dwell, never fails of opposing our progress toward Zion, with its specious, but delusive scenes of happiness. Against the united efforts of such formidable

midable enemies, where shall we find armour of sufficient proof? In a conflict so long and arduous, where shall we meet with such supplies of strength, as will enable us to contend and finally to overcome? The power of contending, and the means of obtaining the victory, are clearly pointed out by the Apostle in my text. "Whatsoever is born of God, "overcometh the world: and this is the Victory that "overcometh the world, even our Faith."

From these words it appears, that those who enlist in this heavenly warfare, are persons of the highest dignity, and most illustrious birth: they are the offspring of him whose "kingdom is not of this world;" they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus "CHRIST; they are "born, not of the will of the "flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

To be "born of God," is to rise out of the ruins of a fallen nature into the glory of a redeemed one. It is to die to Adam, and to live to CHRIST; it is to see, and feel, and forsake our own weakness and vanity and sin, and adhere to the strength and sufficiency and righteousness of CHRIST. The first great work of the SPIRIT OF TRUTH, as our LORD assures us, is to "convince the world of sin." The foundation of that spiritual edifice which Heaven erects in the souls of men, must be laid in humility: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the "kingdom of Heaven!" He that is "born of "God," lives and acts in direct opposition to him who is "born of the flesh:" meekness and love are the prevailing dispositions of the former; pride and selfishness the ruling tempers of the latter. A discerning mind, spiritually enlightened, and viewing mankind as they really are, and not through the false medium of worldly philosophy, will readily discover the

the manifest contrariety with which their characters are marked by these two principles. Look round you, my brethren; look into your own hearts; judge for yourselves: your own experience of what is continually passing within and without you, will afford you ample demonstration of these great truths.

Wherever we discover in ourselves, or in others, the corrupt passions of pride, envy, ill-nature, avarice, anger, jealousy, malice, prevailing, there we may be as certain of the marks of unregenerate nature, as we are of a disorder in the elements, when we see the heavens overcast with clouds, and thunders and lightnings issuing from every quarter of the sky. On the other hand, where meekness and gentleness, self-abasement, a forgetfulness of our own interest, and a disinterested attention to the happiness of others, an heart-felt sympathy in their joys and sorrows, an universal love of God and man, testified by a life of uninterrupted piety and charity; wherever we find these amiable graces and virtues, there are the sure marks of Regeneration; there is the true disciple of Jesus, "born of God, and overcoming the world."

The state of such a soul, with respect to its God, may be expressed in words to this effect: "LORD, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him; or the Son of man, that thou visitest him?" "Behold, LORD, I am less than the least of all thy mercies!" And yet thou hast had respect even unto me; and yet thou hast visited even me, with the greatest of thy mercies! Thou hast caused thy light to shine into the darkness of my nature; thou hast laid open every secret recess of my heart, and shewn me those roots of evil, from whence the innumerable sins of my past life have sprung forth, and diffused their venom throughout my whole frame. Yea, thou
hast

hast not only discovered to me the depth and malignity of sin, but with thy Light, thou hast also imparted thy Life to my soul: thou hast supplied me with strength from above; thou hast furnished me with armour of heavenly proof to encounter the enemies of my peace. Thou hast taught me to despair of my own strength, and to trust in thine arm alone for salvation; thou hast taught me to despise my own righteousness, and to seek thy righteousness in CHRIST JESUS. Though the world should present to me her most alluring charms; though she should give, to her visionary forms, the fairest features that fancy's pencil can delineate; though she should court me to accept her proffered pleasures, in all that false tenderness of language, which artful vice so frequently assumes; yet, armed with thy celestial panoply, I shall be enabled to contend with the enchantress, and overcome her magic power; I shall nobly triumph over all her devices, assert the dignity of my heavenly birth, and preserve my heart unspotted from her impurities. For sure I am, that whilst united in spirit with thee, my GOD and SAVIOUR, I breathe the air of Heaven, I feed upon the bread of angels; the strength of Omnipotence is exerted amid the weakness of nature, and I shall go on, under thine auspicious guidance, "conquering and to conquer."

Such is the state of the virtuous and regenerated Christian, with respect to his GOD. With respect to man, his conduct flows from the same Divine and lovely principle. He deems every spiritual blessing, by which he may be distinguished from the rest of his brethren, as the gift of GOD, to be accepted and enjoyed, not with an haughty, but an humble mind. He does not, therefore, stand aloof from them, as if he was holier than they. He cannot, indeed, but shrink from their vices, and, by a prudent distance
of

of behaviour, shew himself averse to, and even offended with their levities. But he pities their blindness, and compassionates the obduracy of their hearts. He is ever ready to exert himself for the real service of wicked, as well as of good men; knowing, that his "heavenly Father sendeth his rain," and causeth his sun to shine upon the unjust no less than the just."

If he is blessed with worldly affluence, he cheerfully administers to the temporal necessities of his indigent neighbours. If he is poor, and can give them no earthly aid, he will do all he can—he will pray for them, and beg his God to shower down upon them his temporal, as well as spiritual comforts. He suffers no ill conduct on their part to excite his indignation, or make him forget that they are his brethren, to be redeemed by that precious blood, whose salutary influences he has himself experienced. He envies none their fortunes, honours, and accomplishments; neither does he repine, because he is not so rich, or learned, or polite, or advanced to such an exalted rank in life, as others are. He endeavours to be dead alike to the censure and applause of beings, mortal and fallible as himself; inasmuch as he is convinced, that their good or ill opinion cannot make the least alteration in the real state of his soul: he is, therefore, guilty of no mean compliances or time-serving practices, to obtain one, or to avoid the other. He gives "honour to whom honour is due." He endeavours to "owe no man any thing but love:" he is, therefore, careful, not only to pay every just debt, but to avoid embarking in any worldly schemes or prospects of advancing his own interest, to the injury of others. In a word, by piety to God, justice and charity to his neighbour, and chastity and temperance in his own person, he seeks to maintain "a
" conscience

“conscience void of offence towards God and towards man ;” to fill the station in which he is placed, and support the character in which he appears, in such a manner, as will do honour to the Religion of his Master.

This is Evangelical Morality, not confined, as you may observe, to the external conduct of life ; but reaching inward, even to the secret thoughts and inclinations of the heart. What is generally called morality, I am afraid, is little more than an external decency and common sobriety ; and it is well if, in every instance, it is carried even so far. But surely none, but the truly Regenerate Christian, acting under the immediate influence of the DIVINE SPIRIT, can properly be called a moral man. For morality, without an inward principle, is but a name ; and the Scriptures tell us of no other true principle, but “ the LOVE OF GOD shed abroad in the human heart by “ his HOLY SPIRIT.”

Having thus given some of the marks or characteristics by which the Regenerate Christian, or the “ Born of God” is to be known, let us now enquire what the Apostle means, by “ overcoming the “ world,” and ascribing “ the victory to Faith :” “ Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the “ world ; and this is the Victory, that overcometh the “ world, even our Faith.”

“ Overcometh the world !”—methinks I hear some say—“ that is impossible—human nature has passions, “ and the world abounds with objects suited to gratify “ them. Surely the God of nature hath not placed “ man in his present circumstances, to make him “ miserable. He created us for happiness, and “ hath furnished us with the means of obtaining it.

K

“ What

“What a senseless doctrine this, that would shut us
 “out from all the joys, which earth holds forth
 “for our acceptance.”

Alas, vain man! who told thee, that God had given thee such corrupt passions, as now solicit for indulgence? Who told thee, that God created thee, for this world; and that thou art to take up thy rest in that visionary happiness, which thou findest here? These passions are the proofs of thy fall; for thou hast them in common with the beasts of the field. This world is thy temporary prison, though thy disordered imagination may represent it as a palace. Thou art dreaming, though thou thinkest thyself wide awake. Thou art in darkness, and canst not distinguish the true appearance of objects around thee. Let but the **SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** dart one beam into thy benighted soul, and thou wilt soon discover the deception, and long for the power of his Grace to enable thee to triumph over those passions, that have been leading thee blindfold to destruction, and to overcome that world, which hath been cheating thee with visionary gratifications.

“Overcome the world!” says some faint-hearted Christian—“Ah me! how infinitely short do I fall
 “of this glorious standard! I have been striving
 “for months, for years, to get the mastery of this
 “powerful adversary, without being yet able to discover that I have gained the least advantage;
 “though I have exerted my utmost endeavours to disengage myself from his subtil, but violent assaults.”
 Hast thou so? But didst thou ever attend to the true and only means, by which the Scriptures have assured thee this conquest may be obtained? “This
 “is the victory that overcometh the world, even
 “our Faith.”

Now

Now, what is Faith? It is "the substance of" things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen:" that is to say, it is a full and assured trust and confidence in CHRIST, that the things hoped for will be surely obtained, and the things not seen will be fully manifested to our senses. It is such a trust and confidence as realizes the immediate possession of them to our minds, so that we regard not any pain or difficulty we meet with in the pursuit, resting upon an OMNIPOTENT GOD, by whose strength in us every obstacle will be gradually removed, and a complete victory at length secured. Why then, O Christian, shouldst thou despair of success? If thou hast hitherto been striving in thine own strength, and depended upon the power of thine own weak resolution, it is no wonder, thou hast made such small advances. "Without me, ye can do nothing," says our BLESSED REDEEMER, "I can do all things through CHRIST" strengthening me," says his experienced Apostle.

When we repose so much confidence in a friend, as to entrust him with the whole management of our temporal affairs, looking to him in every instance, and upon the least appearance of difficulty or embarrassment, running to him for counsel, and implicitly following his directions, from a thorough conviction of our own ignorance, of his superior skill in business, and his known regard and attachment to us; we are then said to have Faith in such a friend.

And canst thou not, O Christian, have as much Faith in thy SAVIOUR, as one frail mortal has in another? When temptations rise, when dangers threaten, when enemies attack us from within and from without, so that our souls are hard beset, and we know not how to extricate ourselves from the perilous situation; can we not fly with confidence to our

Heavenly Friend, ask his counsel, and entreat his powerful interposition in our behalf? He is ever ready and willing to come to our succour. Nothing is wanting but Faith on our part: and “according to our Faith, so shall it be done unto us.”

We are not, however, to expect, that this Victory will be easily or speedily obtained. The Canaanites were suffered to keep possession of the land of promise for a considerable time, lest the Children of Israel, instead of ascribing the glory of the conquest solely to the LORD OF HOSTS, should vainly arrogate it to themselves, and in consequence of this, lose all sense of their dependence upon him. Many strong and powerful temptations may be permitted to remain unsubdued, to exercise the Christian's Faith, to keep him humble, and duly sensible of his own weakness and inability.

Besides, there is a wonderful analogy betwixt natural and spiritual things. The Child of Grace, as well as the Child of Nature must have a gradual growth, during which many an anxious interval, many a severe pang, many an arduous conflict, must be endured. For let this truth be ever present to our minds, that the Inward Man increases in strength, in proportion as the outward man weakens and decays; and the earthly nature must be totally subdued, before “the BORN OF GOD” can attain the “measure of the stature of the fulness, which is in CHRIST.”

Nor let what hath been said discourage those sincere and upright minds, who have but lately turned their backs upon the world, and entered into the school of CHRIST. Our trials are always suited to our strength. “God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear.” The Child, the Young Man,
and

and the Father in CHRIST, have exercises proper to their different states; they are led on to glory by an unerring hand, which supports them by its invisible, but powerful influence, through the most rugged thorny paths of the Christian course.

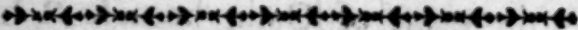
There is no spiritual adversary too strong for the Christian, that engages in the Strength of his REDEEMER. David, though a stripling, vanquished with ease the giant of Gath, because "he went out against him," not in his own strength, but "in the Name of the LORD of Hosts, the GOD of the armies of Israel." The world, with all its temptations and allurements, will be as easily overcome by him, who is truly "born of GOD," as the uncircumcised Philistine was by the hand of David.

To conclude, a worldly spirit is one of the greatest enemies we have to encounter, because it insinuates itself into our hearts under as many different forms, as there are different earthly desires predominant. The man of business, according to the more common acceptation of the phrase, hath obtained the name of a worldly man. But the truth is, wherever a worldly temper prevails, whether it manifests itself in the pursuit of wealth, or honour, or pleasure, or literary applause, or indeed of any object, interest, or end, that is confined merely to this transient state of things; there is the Worldly Spirit, the foe to our real happiness, the "man of sin, the son of perdition;" from which may God of his infinite mercy deliver us, for the sake of the Son of his Love, CHRIST JESUS our Saviour.



DISCOURSE VIII.

FAITH TRIUMPHANT OVER THE POWERS OF DARKNESS.



St. MARK, CHAP. ix. Part of VER. 24.

“ LORD, I BELIEVE: HELP THOU MINE
“ UNBELIEF !”

THE false estimate of happiness, which is made by the generality of men, entirely proceeds from their not taking into the account the real, though invisible, objects of another world, with which they are much more intimately concerned than with the present temporary state of things. Hence it is, that they judge of the seeming pleasures of this life, not from a comparative view of them with the superior enjoyments of a better, but according to the proportion which they bear to one another. It is upon this principle, coinciding with the peculiar constitutional desires of different men, that their different worldly pursuits are formed and regulated.

The penurious grasping miser declaims, with an eloquence which avarice alone inspires, against the rash and silly conduct of the gay and thoughtless spendthrift. The man of pleasure expresses his astonishment at the strange taste, and stupid employment of his neighbour, who can sit poring over his accounts from morning till night, and values himself

himself upon the accuracy with which they are kept, and the strict economy with which all his expences are regulated. The votary of ambition considers his taste and pursuits of a far more sublime nature than those of either of the former, and looks down with contempt upon the plodding dullness of the miser, and the short-lived pleasures of the sensualist. In the mean while, the sagacious enquirer after knowledge, who spends days and nights in the most laborious researches, perpetually seeking after Truth in the countless volumes of antiquity, congratulates himself upon the superiority of his genius, and wonders that all mankind are not so captivated with the charms of science, as immediately to forsake the false and fleeting joys of avarice, ambition, and voluptuousness.

Now all these various desires, employments, and pursuits, however superior some of them may, on comparison, appear to be to others, terminate generally in the nourishment and growth of that fallen life, under which man, in consequence of an original apostasy, is born into this world; and it may truly be said, with respect to them all, that "he is only making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof:" for when the seeming good of this world is the sole object of his attention and affections, he must necessarily be regardless of the real good of another, and a better world. Whatever his desires center in, that constitutes his life; and his own will may be said to create or call forth, from surrounding nature, every thing that can feed and nourish those desires. He stands in the midst of three worlds, principles, or kingdoms, earth, hell, and heaven; and to which soever of these he surrenders his heart, he becomes subject to its power and influence; so that the real state of every man's soul depends upon the

the exercise of his will: his will constitutes his faith; and "according to thy faith," says the unerring Standard of Truth, "so shall it be done unto thee."

An afflicted parent brings to our BLESSED LORD a favourite child, who was sorely vexed and tormented by an evil spirit, and in the most earnest manner entreats his advice and assistance. The compassionate JESUS, after having enquired into the nature and circumstances of the disorder, and observed the distress and solicitude of the father, tells him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

This answer abundantly evinceth the truth of the observation above-mentioned, that our state depends entirely upon the inward exercise of our will or desires. A sensibility of distress naturally disposes us to seek for relief. Nature, without God, is nothing but restless want and anguish: and though fallen man is possessed of the powers and principles, by which this want may be supplied, and this anguish effectually relieved, yet he too frequently seeks the remedy in a wrong source; and cannot be convinced of his error, till the pangs of disappointment succeed to the delusive assurances of worldly faith, and the vain anticipations of worldly hope. Upon this view of human nature it was, that the BLESSED JESUS founded his reply; "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." As if he had said:

Thou appearest to be under great concern and anxiety of mind, for the present afflicting circumstances of thy child. Thou hast a clear and full perception of the cruel agency of an evil spirit, and canst not doubt, but that all his torments are the effects of diabolical influence. If thou desirest to see him

him rescued from this violent spirit, and restored to a sound state of mind and body, thou must believe in the more powerful agency of a Superior Spirit, to whose unlimited controul, all the realms of nature, and its innumerable beings, are subjected, and, consequently, that none but This Spirit, or those to whom he imparts his healing powers, can possibly restore thy son. When this belief rises in thine heart, by a living sensibility that carries its own evidence along with it, thou wilt not entertain a doubt of the will and ability of such a Divine Spirit to perform this miracle of Love, but, in the full confidence of Faith, wilt apply to him, and to him alone, for relief. This very turning of thy will and desire to the Fountain of Goodness, makes it unite with those emanations of spiritual health and vigour, which are perpetually flowing forth from his all-merciful and compassionate heart. "All things are possible" to a soul thus disposed and attuned; and thy child's health, and thine own peace of mind, will be the sure and blessed consequence.

The affectionate parent, overjoyed at a declaration which was accompanied with such a Divine Power as awakened new sensations in his breast, burst into a flood of tears, and cried out, "LORD, I believe, "help thou mine unbelief!" I am sensible, deeply sensible of the absolute necessity of a supernatural interposition; and the mild Majesty of Love, which shines so conspicuous in thy person and address, and whose efficacy hath already passed from thy lips to my poor heart, more than convinces me, that this Supernatural Power of Goodness is lodged with thee. To thee, therefore, and thee alone, I apply! In thee I desire to place my full confidence, earnestly entreating thee to remove from me all darkness, doubt, and uncertainty, by further and brighter manifestations

of thyself, and thy heavenly virtues, in my weak and unbelieving heart !

We are very apt, when we read this, or other such passages of Scripture, to consider them merely as historical facts, in which we are in no wise particularly interested. What have we to do with evil spirits, or possessions, at this day ? Such things might have been permitted, whilst our SAVIOUR was upon earth, to give him an opportunity of displaying the Divine Powers with which he was invested.

Alas ! my brethren, human nature is just the same now, that it was then : " the prince of the power of " the air," and his infernal associates, are as maliciously bent upon our destruction as ever they were ; and the same miraculous interposition of the same powerful and compassionate JESUS, is still equally necessary for our security and relief. These spirits of darkness are continually " walking about, seeking " whom they may devour : " they enter into all our worldly schemes and views ; nay, they are themselves frequently the first projectors of them : they enter into our very blood and spirits, strive to gain possession of the very essence of our souls, and to bring the whole man in subjection to their infernal sway. They have deceived the wise men of this world, whom they have taught to call them by some honourable appellation. Philosophy itself seems, in some instances, to aid them in carrying on their dangerous delusions. Pride, envy, covetousness, lust, malice, which are real spirits of darkness, operating by real, though invisible, influences in the human frame, have made their appearance in a fashionable dress, and have been suffered to keep what is called the best company, when introduced by the names of honour, decency, taste,

taste, dignity of sentiment, virtuous resentment, free-thinking, and free-acting: they are, however, devils in disguise, and are secretly undermining the real felicity of man.

Had we such a view of their cruel treatment of us, as the father just mentioned had of their treatment of his child, you may think, perhaps, that we should take the same steps which he did, towards obtaining relief. And what is it that hinders us from having such a view of our real misery? What, but that fascinating charm, which these very spirits throw before our eyes to deceive us? They surround every worldly object with a false lustre, and thus dazzle, in order to ensnare. Yea, though we frequently detect the imposture, a succeeding one blinds us again. A future world lessens to our view, in proportion as we become attached to the present. Nor is the charm totally dissolved, till by frequent disappointment and vexation, we have learned to read and understand the true name and character of worldly bliss, even "vanity of vanities!" As long as we have Faith in this world, we can have no faith in another; as long as ever we "think ourselves whole," we shall not apply to a physician, or have the least confidence in his skill.

But, blessed be God, there is a time, when the evil spirit tears and wounds the child, and casts him into the fire, and into the water, insomuch, that the affrighted parent is constrained to fly to JESUS for aid. In pain, in sorrow, in distress, in temptation, or upon a sick and dying bed, the sad effects of every diabolical delusion frequently appear in their true colours. Though the infernal spirits themselves then work within us with aggravated rage; though they seem to avail themselves of our bodily indisposition, to

storm the citadel of our hearts; yet they are, in these instances, often egregiously deceived themselves. The trembling sinner, destitute of every outward comfort, which sun, and air, and animal spirits could give him, beholds every sublunary object in its genuine colours, stripped of its false glare, and emptied of its delusive treasure. He cries aloud for help—"What shall I do to be saved?" The Child of God, the offspring of Heaven within me, will be torn to pieces and destroyed by the spirits of darkness. LORD, if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on me and help me! "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth," is the soft answer whispered to his soul. A beam of Heavenly Light and Love accompanies it; sweet silence and stillness succeed; till at length the soul, overpowered by an inexpressible sensibility of meekness and humility, breaks forth in the language of my text, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!" The storm ceaseth; the evil spirits are cast out, and the Child of God is delivered from their oppressive bondage.

"Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," should be the constant language of every Christian's heart. No words can more emphatically express the weakness of man, and his absolute resignation to the Will of God, than these: they take every thing from the creature, and give all to the Creator. Whenever the human will is thus effectually turned to God, it soon manifests its origin, as coming forth from the essentially and eternally Free Will of God. It brings down Heaven into the soul; it triumphs over all opposition; and, through the greatest weakness of human nature, it evidences the all-conquering power of DIVINE LOVE.

Why

Why then, O man! O Christian! Why shouldst thou despond in the hour of trial? "Faith is, indeed, the gift of God;" but it is a gift, which he bestoweth liberally upon all that ask it. Light and darkness, life and death, heaven and hell, are set before us; freely to chuse, and freely to reject, belongs to that free particle of the Divine Essence, which "stirs within us." It was, originally, before the fall of man, the gift of GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. It was the constitution of our nature in its unfallen state: it was, if I may so speak, the Great Charter of Heaven, freely delivered by the King of Heaven, to all his sons and subjects; and though blotted, obliterated, lost by an original apostasy, it is now restored, regained, and purchased by a REDEEMER'S blood.

Shall we then tamely suffer these Rights of Heaven to be invaded by the powers of darkness? Shall we suffer the Child of God, the Redeemed of the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, to be taken captive by the armies of aliens? Shall the splendor of accumulated wealth, the gay circle of worldly pleasure, the tinsel trappings of honour, or the fading breath of popular applause, make us forget our native home, forget that we are but "strangers and pilgrims upon earth," and that we are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God?" Shall we continue the willing slaves of the spirits of darkness, of pride, envy, covetousness and wrath, whilst Heaven is declared to be our inheritance, and our REDEEMER hath assured us, that we have "mansions prepared for our reception in his Father's House."

Ah me! regardless as many of you, my brethren, may be of these illustrious privileges now, the time may come, when a proper sensibility of your present bondage,

bondage, will make you cry aloud for deliverance; when the service of earth and hell will appear base, dishonourable, and unworthy the free-born sons of Light.

When the good Providence of God, in kind commiseration of your secure and thoughtless state, shall send sorrow and affliction to your houses and to your hearts; when the shaft of anguish shall wound you, either in your own persons, or in the persons of those whom you love; when duty, when affection shall call you to some solemn death-bed scene, where you shall behold expiring life just quivering upon the lips of a dear departing friend or relative; or when your own frail tabernacles shall be shaken by disease, and you shall feel death approaching to take possession of the throne of life; when the counsels of the wise, and the sorrows of the tender-hearted, can stand you in no stead; when the immortal tenant of your earthly mansion is just ready to take his flight, and stands trembling on the confines of a world unknown; at these, or such like awful seasons, those amongst you, who have not heretofore experienced the power of Divine Faith, will then, if ever, be made sensible of your want of it. The visionary scene of earthly bliss will vanish like a morning cloud, and deep heart-felt anguish will wring the soul, and make it feel the full horrors of its bondage. But to those, who have already tasted the comforts of religion, and who have been long groaning for deliverance from the captivity of an evil nature, and an evil world, Faith will open the doors of their prison, let in the Light of Heaven as they are able to bear it, and sweetly
sing

sing this song of consolation to their departing spirits: "I will ransom them from death; I will redeem them from the power of the grave. O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy destruction."

THE RIVERS OF WATER, THAT BRING FORTH HIS FRUIT IN HIS SEASON; HIS TROOP ALSO SHALL NOT WITHER, AND WHATSOEVER HE SOW SHALL YIELD.

WHATSOEVER HE SOW SHALL YIELD. In the dispensation of the Almighty, of how-
ever great he may be, the eye of man is often
in the contemplation of spiritual or temporal blessings
springing the sons of men; it will nevertheless be
the contemplation of the communion of the great scheme of
Providence, that he has done every thing "in num-
ber, weight, and measure," and that every part
and parcel of the Divine Administration hath been
planned by unerring Wisdom, and conducted by
universal and unchangeable Love.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE FLOURISHING STATE OF THE RE-
GENERATE.

PSALM i. VER. 3.

“ HE SHALL BE LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY
“ THE RIVERS OF WATER, THAT BRINGETH
“ FORTH HIS FRUIT IN HIS SEASON: HIS
“ LEAF ALSO SHALL NOT WITHER, AND
“ WHATSOEVER HE DOETH SHALL PROS-
“ PER.”

WHATEVER seeming inequality there may be
in the dispensations of the Almighty, or how-
ever partial he may appear to the eye of human reason,
in his distribution of spiritual or temporal blessings
among the sons of men; it will, nevertheless, be
found, at the consummation of the great scheme of
Providence, that he has done every thing “ in num-
“ ber, weight, and measure;” and that every part
and period of the Divine Administration hath been
planned by unerring Wisdom, and conducted by
universal and impartial Love.

Minute

Minute philosophers, and men who value themselves upon what they call a liberal and enlarged way of thinking, may imagine, that this is no more than a religious dream, and argue, from present appearances, that "all things happen alike unto all men, and that there is but one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to him that serveth God, and to him that serveth him not." But the Heaven-taught philosopher, whose inward eye is illuminated from above, can see into the secret springs, by which the vast machine is perpetually kept in motion, and by which all the infinite variety of workings in intelligent and inanimate nature, are rendered subservient to the Glory of God, and the final consummation of his eternal plan in the supreme felicity of his creatures. By virtue of that heavenly euphrasy with which his visual ray is purged and cleansed, he sees, and is intimately convinced, that notwithstanding the frequent vicissitudes with which the life of a good man is sadly checquered, he is nevertheless "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; that his leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper."

There is a peculiar beauty and propriety in this similitude, and every part of it bears a wonderful analogy to that spiritual life, into which fallen man hath been reinstated by the **MEDIATION OF THE SON OF GOD.**

Man, by turning his will from his Maker, lost that paradisiacal glory, in which he was originally created; and found nothing left, in its stead, but a wrathful spirit within, and a dark disordered world without. By this act of his own will, he transplanted his nature, if I may so speak, from the delightful

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garden

garden of Eden, in which the ALMIGHTY had placed him, into the midst of a thorny barren desert. He deprived it of all that nourishment it received from those waters of life, which surrounded the blissful spot; and, in consequence, it must have been parched up and have withered away, had not DIVINE LOVE affectionately interposed, and put him once more into a capacity of recovering his lost inheritance, and regaining the vital streams, by which alone his heavenly nature could be preserved and cherished.

It is true, man still continues in the desert of fallen nature: the first Adam is still condemned to till the ground from whence he was taken. But the second Adam, the LORD from Heaven, hath caused those rivers of water, which are solely at his disposal, to flow through the dry and comfortless waste, that "the wilderness and solitary place might thereby be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom like the rose."

When man, therefore, convinced of his dark and barren state by nature, and the sovereign efficacy of these waters of life to cheer and restore him, freely opens his heart for their reception, he is then, indeed, like "a tree planted by the rivers of water." His roots shoot deep, and his branches spread fair and luxuriant in the heavenly element. The kindly moisture insinuates itself into every part, and leaves and flowers and fruits manifest the internal operation of the life-giving stream.

"I am the vine; ye are the branches."—says the LORD OF LIFE. "As the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." There must be an intimate union

union betwixt **CHRIST** and his redeemed offspring; an union not suddenly formed, and as suddenly broken, but piously and constantly maintained; an abiding union without which there can be no communication of his Heavenly Virtues, and, consequently, no fruits of holiness. But wheresoever this blessed union effectually takes place, the regenerated nature soon springs forth; the bud, the blossom, the leaves, the fruits, all appear in their proper season: the man of **GOD** stands forth confest, and, like a tree nourished by a living stream, imparts his refreshing shade, and pleasant wholesome fruits, to all around.

Would you know what these fruits are? They are fully enumerated by the Apostle, who tells us, that "the fruits of the **SPIRIT** are love, joy, peace, "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These fruits, says my text, are "brought forth in their season." The sun must shine upon the tree, the air must breathe, the dews and rains must descend, and the rivers of water must rise through the roots into the trunk and branches. All this process must be performed, before the fruit will appear.

It is just so with that "plant of celestial seed," which is sown in the human heart. Meekness, humility, resignation, love, &c. are not the growth of an hour: days, and months, and years, must pass, before they will begin to appear. I well know, that the first faint manifestation of these graces, in an awakened soul, hath frequently been mistaken for the whole of a sinner's conversion. It has been called the "witness of the spirit," testifying to the sinner, that the act of his justification is past, and that his pardon is sealed in the courts of Heaven. The Witness of the **SPIRIT** it undoubtedly is, because it

results from an union of the human spirit with the Divine. And as the DIVINE SPIRIT is meekness and love supreme, so it is no wonder that such an union should produce such a spiritual sensation. But we are not to conclude from hence, that a sudden, and seemingly instantaneous sensibility of Heavenly Peace and Love, can be the whole of our conversion. It is, doubtless, a sweet token of Divine Grace; an happy earnest of the residence of the DIVINE SPIRIT, who, perhaps, for years before, had been seeking to manifest himself in our hearts, and now gives us this present consolation, as the result of previous and frequent operations. Our salvation is so far from depending upon these momentary sensations, that our LORD expressly assures us, that though we are united to him by as intimate an union as "the branches are to the vine; yet, except we "abide in him, we shall be cast as withered branches "into the fire."

"Let him, then, that thinketh he standeth, take "heed lest he fall." Let us not value ourselves upon past experiences, or think that we are God's children, and that our names are indelibly written in his book of life, merely because we were once under spiritual distress, and were once rescued from it by the consolations of his SPIRIT. Nothing can preserve us in a state of union with our Divine REDEEMER, but an inward, constant thirsting after those "waters of life," which he alone can give us. Whilst we stand before him in such a frame of soul, meekly and humbly waiting for such portions of his Grace, as he sees necessary and expedient to impart, we may then be assured, that "our leaf shall not "wither, and that whatsoever we do shall prosper." For when the will of man coincides with the Divine Will, and is implicitly resigned thereto in every situation, circumstance, and event of life, he must necessarily

necessarily prosper, because God wills nothing but Good, and Good Supreme is the aim and end of all his dispensations.

Well, but say some, How can this be? Do we not daily see the best of men, groaning under the most grievous calamities, pining away with sickness, worn out with pain, or afflicted with some sad reverses of fortune? On the other hand, do we not daily behold men, who shew not the least regard to religion, who have no fear of God before their eyes, who neither in private nor in public testify the least sense of their dependance upon him, or their connexion with another world, who violate his sabbaths, deride his Revelation, and scoff at every thing that bears the appearance of seriousness or sobriety; do we not daily behold such men advanced to the pinnacle of preferment, abounding in wealth, favoured with health and strength, and furrounded with every good thing this world can afford? Yes—we certainly do; and so did David many ages since. But attend to David's reflections upon this subject, and you will find them rational and satisfactory.

“ I was grieved at the wicked: I do also see the
“ ungodly in such prosperity. For they are in no
“ peril of health, but are lusty and strong. They
“ come in no misfortune like other folk, neither are
“ they plagued like other men. Lo, these are the
“ ungodly; these prosper in the world, and these
“ have riches in possession: and I said, then have I
“ cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in
“ innocency. Yea, I had almost said even as they;
“ but lo, then I should have condemned the genera-
“ tion of thy children. Then thought I to understand
“ this, but it was too hard for me, until I went into
“ the sanctuary of God; then understood I the end of
“ these

“ these men, namely, that thou dost set them in slippery places, and castest them down and destroyest them. O, how suddenly do they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end !”

These are David's reflections on the condition of wicked men in his day ; and the experience of preceding, as well as of after ages, does abundantly confirm them. Vice will, sooner or later, meet with its recompence, even in this world. But supposing this should not be the case, and that good and righteous men should have a much larger share of temporal misery than the wicked ; yet it may with truth be said, that by this very misery they prosper ; yea, that their inward prosperity keeps pace with their outward sufferings.

Every thing that has a tendency to disengage the heart and affections from this transient scene of things, ought to be deemed a real blessing. Now, who can deny, that sickness, pain, sorrow and affliction, have in their very nature this tendency ? and, when seen by the happy sufferer in a true point of light, they never fail of producing this effect. Hence it is, that many a pious soul is enabled to rejoice in such visitations, and to thank God for them as the richest blessings : for, “ though no chastisement for the present is joyous, but rather grievous ; yet it afterwards yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby.” True it is, that the outward man suffers, and is sadly weakened and distressed ; but the Inward Man, the Child of God, thrives and prospers. The riches of eternity appear more and more real, in proportion as he discovers the vanity of time ; and his disappointment in any worldly concern, is sure to render him more prosperous and successful in matters of eternal moment.

Alas !

Alas! methinks I hear some say, it would be well if it were always so. But are not many good men afflicted inwardly, as well as outwardly? Are they not often destitute of spiritual as well as of worldly comforts? Are not their souls as much bowed down by the weight of their sinful nature, as their bodies by temporal evils and infirmities? And can these men be said to "prosper in whatsoever they do?" Surely, they are alike unfortunate with respect to the present and the future world.

Suspend thy judgment, poor partial observer! reason not from appearances. Inward darkness, and distress, and anguish, are the proper inlets through which the CHRIST OF GOD is received into the heavy-laden soul. A sensibility of its burden makes it groan for relief: and the very moment that "patience hath done its perfect work," and the human will is thereby brought to yield itself with implicit resignation to its God, the burden drops, and sweet peace and tranquillity of soul succeed. God never willingly afflicts his children; he deals with them as a most indulgent parent. Sin must be known and felt, before it can be shunned and conquered. And it is by repeated strokes, that the wayward child is taught to avoid what may prove injurious and destructive to its happiness.

To conclude with the apt similitude of my text: the real Christian is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water;" they afford it all the nourishment that is necessary. The stormy wind and the beating rain, while they try its strength, increase it; they make it cling closer to the kindly soil,

foil, take deeper root, and bear fruit in greater abundance. Thus, "all things work together for good, to them that love God;" and "whatsoever they do," notwithstanding the many apparent disappointments and disquietudes they meet with, "shall finally prosper," and terminate in never-fading bliss.

DIS-

DISCOURSE X.

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF THE DISORDERS
OF HUMAN NATURE.

St. MARK, CHAP. vii. VER. 34.

“AND LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN, HE SIGHED;
“AND SAITH UNTO HIM, EPHPHATHA! THAT
“IS, BE OPENED.”

A Serious and philosophical mind, contemplating the innumerable evils, physical and moral, to which men are exposed during their short continuance in this world, would very naturally conclude, that the present state could not be that for which the ALMIGHTY originally intended them. Storms and tempests, sickness and pain, darkness and disorder, in the natural world; and the various and destructive effects of pride, envy, covetousness, and wrath, in the moral world; are so contrary to the Divine Nature, which is Life, Light, and Love, eternal and unchangeable, that it would be almost blasphemy to say, that such a system was the original finished workmanship of his adorable hand.

To such contemplations as these, philosophy might lead her sober votary—But Divine Revelation alone can carry him back to the origin of things, and give him the true information with respect to their present appearances. By this we learn, that the beautiful order and harmony of creation were marred by the creature's transgression; who turning his will from the source of infinite GOODNESS, lost that first state in which his Maker had placed him, and wherein all was light and joy; and found himself in subjection to an evil nature within, and a world of darkness and distress without. By this too we are informed, that nothing less than a return to his Original Source, could reinstate him in his original bliss; that this return could be rendered possible in no other way, than by a ray, a spark, a seed, an earnest, a taste or touch of his first life, imparted or inspoken into his fallen nature by the GOD OF LOVE, to be gradually opened and unfolded by such a Redeeming Process, as, with the co-operation of his own will, would effectually restore him to his primeval felicity; and that this was undertaken, and only could be undertaken and accomplished, by that ETERNAL SON OF THE FATHER, in and by whom man was originally created, and in and by whom alone he could be redeemed.

Accordingly we find, that when this Express Image of the Hidden Deity appeared on earth, cloathed in our fallen flesh and blood, he was invested with an absolute and uncontrollable power and authority over the whole system of temporary nature. His wonder-working Fiat was sufficient to calm, in an instant, the most aggravated fury of the winds and seas; and, as proceeding from the same wrathful source, to assuage the violence of raging fevers; to heal, by a mere touch, by a word, the most inveterate

veterate diseases; and to restore every organ of sense, which had been injured or destroyed, to its true state, and proper use and function. And as all outward disorders primarily proceed from a wrong state of the human spirit, his influence pervaded the inmost recesses of the soul, and awakened and called forth that precious spark of his own Heavenly Fire, which had lain buried under the ashes of sin; and bade it enlighten, invigorate, and restore health and peace to the whole man.

The gospel for the day presents us with a very remarkable instance of the amazing effects of these redeeming powers—"Jesus, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis, and they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue: and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha! that is, Be opened!"

There are three circumstances in this miraculous cure worthy of our serious attention, viz. the looking up to heaven, the sigh, and the Ephphatha.

I. The looking up to heaven, was beautifully expressive of the real situation, in which this great Restorer of human nature stood before his Heavenly Father. It was intended, no doubt, to communicate to every attentive observer, this great lesson of instruction; that all the powers and virtues of which he was possessed, came down from above; that they were communicated to him "without measure;" and

that he could have no authority over the evils of human life, so as either to mitigate or remove them, but by standing continually in the Heavenly World, inspiring its air, receiving its beams of light and love, and sending them forth into every human heart, that was truly desirous of receiving them ; and that it was by such a communication alone, that he should be enabled to restore hearing and speech to the unhappy patient they had brought before him.

II. This look was accompanied with a sigh. A sigh seems to indicate distress. An anxious oppressed and afflicted heart is sometimes so full, as to deprive the tongue of the power of utterance ; it vents itself, therefore, in a sigh. But what could oppress or afflict the heart of the Meek and Innocent JESUS ? His body, though a fallen one, does not seem to have been sick or in pain ; his soul was sweetly attuned to Divine Love, and could have felt nothing but inward peace and serenity—and yet, he sighs ! —The poor deaf and dumb sinner, who stood before him, had reason enough to sigh ; but he was insensible of his misery, and therefore sought not for relief. The truth is this : The BLESSED JESUS, as the Second Adam, the Father and Regenerator of our whole lapsed race, voluntarily assumed our nature, and became as intimately united to it, as the head to the members of the body. In consequence of this union, “ he knows whereof we are made, he “ remembers that we are but dust.” His sympathetic heart is sensible of every want and distress of every son and daughter of Adam. He is persecuted with the church that Saul persecuteth ; and “ whoso “ toucheth his children, toucheth the apple of his “ eye.” Yea, he feels for those, who feel not for themselves ; and sighs over the sad state of those, who are blind to their true happiness ; “ who call “ evil

“evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for
“light, and light for darkness.”

It was from such a tender sensibility of human woe, that our Lord sighed, whilst he was preparing to perform this miracle of love. This look, this sigh, seem to have uttered some such language as this: “O Heavenly Father! I am come into this world to fulfil thy blessed will, in the restoration of fallen men to their primeval light and glory. My desire of accomplishing this great work, which is continually called forth by a general view of their complicated misery, as well as by the particular wants and distresses of individuals, now solicits, in favour of the poor mortal that stands before me, the application of those healing powers, which I have received from thee!” This expression of our LORD’s desire, coinciding with the Eternal Will to All Goodness, immediately produced the Divine Ephphatha.

III. “And he saith unto him, Ephphatha! that is, “Be opened.” Whatever salutary efficacy there may be in medicine, it must proceed from that Heavenly virtue, which rises from the re-union of divided properties. This re-union is the source of health, and the restoration of aught that may be impaired in any of our outward organs, or inward faculties. To him, who had all nature under his controul, who knew how to bring together and unite, in an instant, those properties which have been separated, a single word, the mere motion of his will, was sufficient to produce the desired effect. The same Majesty that said, “Let there be light!” when “darkness was upon the face of the deep,” now uttered the authoritative cure, “Be opened!” The injured organs were instantly renewed; “his
“ears

"ears were opened, the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."

The same Supernatural Powers, which the BLESSED Jesus displayed upon this occasion, he still continues to exercise in the hearts of his redeemed offspring. This look, this sigh, this Ephphatha, is spiritually fulfilled in the relief of every one, who is convinced of his spiritual disorders, and applies to CHRIST for a cure,

Deaf and dumb with respect to our inward and spiritual senses, we all are by nature. We can hear and speak, indeed, of worldly things, with a quickness and facility, which manifests, in innumerable instances, the strong attraction by which they hold our attention and affections: the calls of business and of pleasure, we are ever ready to answer. Our earthly senses are continually open; but our heavenly faculties are closed by a thousand obstructions, which we suffer the devil, the world, and the flesh, to form in our hearts.

The great Shepherd of Israel, who is perpetually employed in "seeking and saving that which was lost," makes use of a variety of means and methods to bring the soul to a conviction of its loss. The efficacy of these depends, indeed, upon the concurrence of the human will; because nothing can come into the soul, but what itself wills or desires. The different dispensations of Providence are wisely and affectionately adapted to the different circumstances of individuals: the end and design of them all is one and the same, viz. to bring the wandering creature to a sense of his deviations, and "to guide his feet into the ways of peace."

By

By whatever means this conviction is wrought, the soul soon becomes sensible of its mistaken choice, and soon determines to withhold its attention from the calls of earthly objects. In vain does the Syren sing her delusive song, it ceases now to charm; for the finger of God stops the outward ear, that the inward ear may be opened to a sweeter note. The awakened sinner "looks up and lifts " up his head, for his redemption draweth nigh"—looks up to Heaven—For what? for the healing hand of his Redeemer to interpose, and remove every remaining obstruction—looks up, and sighs—no desire of deliverance, without a previous sensibility of distress—a sigh is the true language of desire; it is more effectual than long prayer; it is prayer itself, in its true spirit: words do frequently render it less spiritual. The sigh of a contrite sinner brings down Heaven into his heart. Jesus often sighed. He loves a sigh; it invites him into his own Temple; and " Ephphatha, be " opened!" is the blessed voice that precedes his salutary entrance.

Be opened!—Opened, to what?—To the Harmony of Heaven; to the symphonies of angels; to " the Voice of the Bridegroom." " The marriage of the Lamb" is come; the Bride is prepared; the silver chord is tied; the blessed union is completed! The soul is now all eye, all ear, all heart, all tongue: and eye, and ear, and heart, and tongue, are all employed in receiving the gifts and graces, and celebrating the beauties and perfections of him, who is " fairest among ten " thousand, who is altogether lovely."

O BLESSED

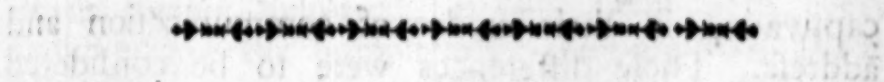
O BLESSED JESUS! vouchsafe, we beseech thee, so to manifest thy power in opening our ears, and loosing our tongues, that we may henceforth hear no voice but thine, and offer up our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to none but thee, who, with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, art ONE GOD, blessed for evermore!

DIS



DISCOURSE XI.

THE RICHES AND GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN.



I COR. CHAP. iii. VER. 21, 22, 23.

“ THEREFORE LET NO MAN GLORY IN MEN,
“ FOR ALL THINGS ARE YOURS: WHETHER
“ PAUL, OR APOLLOS, OR CEPHAS, OR THE
“ WORLD, OR LIFE, OR DEATH, OR THINGS
“ PRESENT, OR THINGS TO COME; ALL ARE
“ YOURS. AND YE ARE CHRIST’S, AND
“ CHRIST IS GOD’S.”

THESE words contain a complete and beautiful enumeration of those distinguishing privileges to which human nature is exalted, by virtue of that glorious plan of Redemption, which JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD hath accomplished for our whole fallen race. They were occasioned by some little jealousies and envyings, which had broken out among the Corinthians, in consequence of an undue attachment to particular apostles and preachers of the gospel; some declaring themselves publicly in favour of one, and some of another; some saying they were of Paul, others of Apollos, and others of Cephas.

O

Upon

Upon this occasion the blessed Apostle, in the true spirit of Christian Love, and free disinterested impartial Charity, reminds them of this grand and important truth, "that no man can lay any other foundation, than that is laid, even JESUS CHRIST;" that whatever difference there might be in the particular gifts and talents of their different preachers, yet no preference was to be given on this account, but their attention was solely to be directed to those fundamental principles, which all were labouring to inculcate, though all were not equally agreeable and captivating in their modes of communication and address. These differences were to be considered as accidental and external, and by no means sufficient to warrant any partial personal distinctions. He makes use of a variety of the most sensible and cogent arguments, to dissuade them from a conduct so illiberal and unchristian; and in order most effectually to silence such a spirit of contention, he reminds them, in my text, of the high and exalted privileges to which they themselves were called in CHRIST JESUS,—“Therefore let no man glory in men.” As if he had said:

Let none of you value yourselves upon your personal attachment to this or that favourite Apostle; let none of you boast of the superior spiritual excellencies of those particular teachers, to whom you have fondly surrendered your affections; or look upon the spiritual knowledge you have acquired, as proceeding from any powers or virtues in them, superior to those of their brethren: for let me assure you, such vain distinctions are beneath the character of those, who are themselves united to that very Source and Fountain, from whence the living streams of real knowledge, holiness, and happiness, do alone proceed: “For all things are yours, whether Paul,
“ or

“ or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or
 “ death, or things present, or things to come ; all
 “ are yours, and ye are CHRIST’S, and CHRIST
 “ is God’s.”

What a glorious inheritance is here ! the whole universe of things declared to belong to the Redeemed Race of Adam ! No prophecy is of private interpretation. From the beginning to the end of the Bible, every prediction, every promise, every truth therein delivered, equally belongs to every individual of the human race : they are addressed to all without exception. What a senseless distinction then is that, which some narrow minds have adopted, and are fond of propagating, that the promises of Scripture are made to none but believers ? Whereas, these promises are the very foundation of every one’s faith, and the ground upon which every one’s hope of Salvation rests.

No son of fallen Adam can apply for pardon upon any other ground, than that the promises of Scripture, which are founded upon the Universal and Impartial Love of God, are made to him, and every other person in the like circumstances. His faith in these promises makes a glorious change, with respect to himself ; but, on the part of God, who is “ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever,” they were made to him before he believed, or thought any thing about them : “ We love him, because he first loved us.” He hath elected all mankind to salvation, in his Son JESUS CHRIST. An immortal inheritance is secured to all, by the Merits of this BLESSED MEDIATOR ; and if any fall short of this salvation, or lose their inheritance, the blame must lie at their own door : “ They would not come to CHRIST, that they might have life.”

Should an affectionate parent, with the utmost care and anxiety, make such an ample provision for the sober and virtuous education of his children, as, if accepted and improved by them, would secure to them knowledge, esteem, and happiness in this world; would not such a parent be thought to have done all that love and tenderness could do in this respect, for the future welfare of his offspring? The provision is equally secured to all, and yet, if any thoughtless, perverse, disobedient child, should refuse to avail himself of these paternal blessings, and prefer an idle, dissolute, and abandoned life, to all the advantages which the father had taken care he should be furnished with, he might justly be told, as the Apostle tells the Corinthians—"All these things are yours." Your Father hath made you equal with the rest of his children—knowledge, esteem, and happiness, is as much in your power as in theirs; your falling short of them, therefore, is owing to nothing but your own perverse disposition—"they are yours," but you will not enjoy them.

The same might be said of a temporal inheritance equally divided among a family of children; each has an equal portion: and yet if any child should be so weak and silly, as to chuse to forego the enjoyment of his share, and prefer penury and contempt to opulence and honour, he might still be told, that the portion was his, though he was so foolish as to neglect and forsake it.

Even so, "an inheritance incorruptible, immortal, and that fadeth not away," is secured, in CHRIST JESUS, to every individual of our fallen race: "All things are ours," by virtue of that Heavenly Nature, which we inherit from JESUS CHRIST the
second

second Adam. Upon the birth, growth, and maturity of this Heavenly Nature, depends our possession of this Eternal Inheritance; and this birth, growth, and maturity again depend upon the co-operation of our wills, which are eternally and essentially free, with the Divine Will.

What I have here asserted, is fully consonant to the very letter of Scripture: "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But if God is willing to save all, Why are not all saved? Why do not all men come immediately to repentance?—The reason is obvious: it depends not, as some vainly assert, upon a secret Will of God, distinct from his Revealed Will. Such an idea of the GOD OF TRUTH AND LOVE, is unscriptural, and even blasphemous—No, it depends wholly upon the co-operation of our wills, with the unchangeable Will of God. The promise is made to all; the inheritance is secured to all; but the possession and enjoyment can never come, till the will of the creature is united to the will of the Creator; till from a deep conviction of his own nothingness by nature, he freely opens his heart to the influences of Grace—and then he finds, by a blessed experience, that, "having nothing, he possesseth all things."

When a minister of CHRIST, therefore, addresses himself to a sinner, insensible of his fallen condition, and strongly attached to that earthly life, which he inherits from fallen Adam, he cannot use a more effectual argument, than that which the Apostle in my text presses upon the divided and contentious Corinthians—For so far as these jealousies and disputes prevailed among them, they were doubtless under the evil influences of the same corrupt nature, to which the unregenerate are in bondage.

"Why,

“Why, vain mortal, why, alas! art thou so strangely blind to thy best interests, so amazingly neglectful of thy real happiness?” Thou fleest from the substance, and embracest a shadow; thou pursuest the vanity of time, and despisest the riches of eternity; thou preferrest the life of a beast to the life of an angel; thou art content to feed upon husks among swine, whilst in “thy Father’s house” there is bread enough, and to spare.”—Thou art in search of a false and delusive happiness in this world, whilst, if thou wouldst but attend to and “know the things that belong to thy peace,” thou wouldst soon discover, that “all things are thine.” For poor, wretched, sinful, polluted as thou art in thine outward nature, thou hast, within thee, a Seed of Eternal Life, a birth of the TRIUNE GOD, a Son of the Second Adam, a Reconception of the Light and Love of God, an Angel near its birth. To this seed, this birth, this son, this reconception, this angel in thy breast, belongs the Kingdom of Heaven, the pure element of Life, and Light, and Love. JESUS CHRIST, thy Ever Blessed Redeemer, hath sown in thy heart, and in the hearts of all thy fellow-sinners, this Seed of his own Heavenly Nature, by means of which, he affectionately purposes to redeem thee from the bondage of corruption, and exalt thee to a glorious state of life and liberty. As he is invested with “all power both in heaven” and in earth,” so this offspring of his, which is within thee, will become a partaker of his Power, in proportion as it becomes a partaker of his Life and Spirit, in proportion as it increases in Heavenly Wisdom and Stature.

If thou shouldst ask, how this growth and increase is to be obtained, and how all things are thine?—I could answer thee, that as the earth-born
babe

babe could never grow and increase in bodily strength, without a perpetual supply of the light, and air, and food, which this outward world affords; so it is as really and physically true, that the Heaven-born offspring of the Second Adam, can never grow or increase in spiritual strength, without the light, and air, and food of the heavenly world, imparted by its tender and affectionate parent, **JESUS CHRIST**: and as nothing disposes the earthly infant to receive that nourishment which is suited to its nature, but the hunger of that nature, earnestly crying for a supply; so nothing can dispose the Heavenly babe within, to receive the precious influences of Divine Life and Grace, which alone can satisfy its nature, but an hunger and earnest desire of this Heavenly Food; or, in other words, the spirit of the will turning to **CHRIST**, loathing all other nourishment, and desiring only to be fed with his Bread of Eternal Life.

Thus fed, supported, and strengthened, by a Vital Union with thine adorable **REDEEMER**, thou standest not in thine own strength, but in his, not in thine own righteousness, but the Righteousness of **CHRIST** within thee; not in thine outward and perishing nature, but in thy inward, Angelical, and Divine Nature. In this nature, sweetly mingling with its own kindred element, thou art safe, firm and collected; all temporal objects are beneath thy feet; like Adam in his paradisiacal state, the earth, and all that is therein, is subject to thy will. Health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, storms and calms, spiritual comforts or spiritual distresses, the vicissitudes of life, the horrors of death, the vanity of time, and the riches of eternity, are all at thy command, and thou makest them all subservient to thy spiritual growth and consolation.

All

All these powers, virtues, and enjoyments, are thine; thine by the Free Gift of God in CHRIST JESUS, imparted to thee, and made thine, at the very moment the "Seed of the Woman" was in-spoken into Adam's fallen nature. It is true, they are in a hidden state, and require the strongest exertion of thy will co-operating with thy Saviour, in calling them forth. They can only appear and manifest themselves, in proportion as thy will is given up to CHRIST, in proportion as thou diest to thine earthly nature, and its earthly desires, and becomest one Desire, one Will, one Spirit with thy REDEEMER. This is not a sudden and instantaneous work: the process is slow and painful. Many a right hand must be cut off; many a right eye must be plucked out; many a favourite passion must be sacrificed, many a weary step taken, many a temptation baffled, many a victory obtained against the devil, the world, and the flesh, before "all things are thine" by actual possession.

The combat is tedious, and the victory sometimes appears doubtful. But be not discouraged at this—darkness as well as light, doubt as well as assurance, weakness as well as strength, will help thee on thy way. Thy REDEEMER is perpetually watching over his own offspring; he eyes thee with ineffable compassion throughout thy whole progress, and renders all its vicissitudes subservient to thy real and eternal welfare.

Think not, that it is necessary to thy spiritual growth, that thou shouldst walk in perpetual sunshine, beneath a clear unclouded sky. The howling winds, the beating rain, are equally necessary at times; and are as powerful and operative in spiritual, as in earthly vegetation. Through these, and worse than

than these, even the gloomy vale of the shadow of death, the invisible hand of an Omnipotent REDEEMER shall conduct thee safe to a region of uncreated light and glory, where eternal nature, in its essential and unchangeable splendors, manifests the Beatifying Presence of FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST, in their full and undivided Trinity of Glory.

What though pain of body, and inward anguish of soul, should assault thee; what though disease should blast the bloom of health, and convulsion rack and rend thine earthly frame; what though death, with all his grim attendants, should knock at thy door, summon thee to relinquish all thy temporal prospects, and to enter at once into the world of spirits; this single reflection, that CHRIST has made "all things thine," will be sufficient to support thy sinking frame; nay, more, thou wilt rejoice in thy deliverance from the captivity of the body, look forward with transport into the Paradise to which thou art hastening, nor "cast one longing lingering look behind."

Such an address as this, from a minister of CHRIST, to a poor thoughtless sinner, I cannot but think, by the blessing of GOD, would have a more sure and certain effect upon his hardened heart, than all the terrors of eternal damnation, thundered, as is too frequently the case, with more than brutal violence and impetuosity against him. For such a method would open two things to his mind, which are equally necessary to be revealed to him, neither of which he can attend to in his present thoughtless condition, viz. the sin and vanity of his fallen life, and the comfort, happiness, and glory of his redeemed nature—one should never be opened without the other: it

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would only be probing the wound, without administering the restoring balsam. This method which I have mentioned, was that which our dear REDEEMER and his blessed Apostles always used; and if Christian ministers would more carefully tread in their footsteps, they might be sure of greater success: not perhaps in the way of extraordinary awakenings, violent convictions, and instantaneous joys; but in the still, calm, and soothing ways of the Gospel of Peace and Love.

We should never tell the sinner, that he is by nature under the bondage of the devil, the world, and the flesh, without acquainting him, that he has in him an High and Heavenly nature, to which he would do well to attend, as to a Light shining in the midst of his darkness. When we point out the destructive consequences of sin, we should enlarge at the same time upon the delights of holiness, and the exalted privileges of those that follow it. Thus we should imitate the Apostle in my text, who upon giving this advice to his Corinthian brethren, "Let no man glory in men." immediately adds this high and encouraging motive to the practice of it, "For all things are yours."

DISCOURSE XII.

THE RICHES AND GLORY OF THE
CHRISTIAN.

I COR. CHAP. iii. VER. 21, 22, 23.

“THEREFORE LET NO MAN GLORY IN MEN,
“FOR ALL THINGS ARE YOURS: WHETHER
“PAUL, OR APOLLOS, OR CEPHAS, OR THE
“WORLD, OR LIFE, OR DEATH, OR THINGS
“PRESENT, OR THINGS TO COME; ALL ARE
“YOURS, AND YE ARE CHRIST’S, AND
“CHRIST IS GOD’S.”

MY former discourse from these words contained a general view of the Apostle’s reasoning in this chapter. I observed, that this part of his epistle was occasioned by some envyings and jealousies which had crept into the Corinthian church, in consequence of an undue distinction and preference which different persons had shewn to different Apostles and Preachers of the Gospel; and that, in order to silence these controversies, the Apostle, after a variety of other excellent arguments, concludes with enumerating the high and distinguishing Privileges, to which the Corinthians themselves were called, in common

with those very teachers, whose excellencies they were so injudiciously magnifying.

He tells them, that they ought not to "glory in man;" that is, to boast of the superior excellencies of this or that favourite Preacher, because "all things were theirs;" that by virtue of that Heavenly Nature, which they, as well as their teachers, inherited from JESUS CHRIST the Second Adam, they were provided with a glorious inheritance, and invested with high powers and privileges, whereby this world, and every thing in it, was subject to their will, when in union and co-operation with the Eternal and Unchangeable Will of their REDEEMER: so that all personal distinctions among men, all personal admiration of their peculiar talents and most shining endowments, were beneath the character of such high-born souls, and ought not to come into competition with the Heavenly Graces of love, meekness, humility, mutual forbearance, condescension and peace, by which alone the dignity of their birth could be asserted, and the actual possession of their spiritual privileges known and ascertained.

I endeavoured likewise to explain to you, the glorious and comfortable meaning and import of this general proposition of the Apostle, "All things are yours:" and shewed, by several similitudes and observations, that this was not only applicable to the Corinthians, and the most effectual motive that the Apostle could make use of, to disengage them from their narrow and carnal notions and jealousies; but that it is equally applicable to all men, at all times, and in all places and circumstances; and the most effectual method that a Minister of CHRIST can make use of, to awaken thoughtless sinners, and
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engage them to pursue the things that belong to their peace.

Let me now, therefore, entreat your attention, whilst I enter upon the consideration of those particular Privileges, which are enumerated under this general head.

As the immediate design of the Apostle, upon this occasion, was to put an end to that strife and division, which subsisted among them from the attachment of different persons to different preachers, so the first Privilege he mentions, is this, that in whatever light they might consider the matter, these Apostles and Preachers were nothing in themselves, but were furnished with peculiar talents and endowments for the service of their brethren: they were "theirs," because instruments in the hands of Heaven, to awaken their attention, and engage their pursuit of real spiritual knowledge and happiness; and they were only to be considered in this light, without any other personal respect and veneration, than that which their character, as instruments, might claim: for "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas."

That this is a true and just representation of the Apostle's design, we may learn from his reasoning in the preceding part of the chapter. He charges them with acting under the immediate influence of earthly and carnal motives; and though he had adapted his preaching to their slender capacities, though he had fed them with milk, as being yet in the state of infants, and incapable of receiving or digesting the strong meat of the great and glorious mysteries of the Gospel, yet they did not profit even by this; for they had acquired no new spiritual strength

strength from thence; nay, they not only remained in their infant state, unable to bear a further revelation of Gospel Truth, but gave themselves up again to the principles and dictates of corrupt nature. “Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envyings, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?—For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the LORD gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither he that planteth is any thing, neither he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase. Now he that planteth, and he that watereth, are one.” As if he had said:

“I am truly sorry, O Corinthians! to find that such unexpected animosities have risen among you: they are too flagrant proofs of your deviation from that path of Gospel Truth and Love, into which you had but just entered. Certain indeed, it is, that I have laboured among you with unceasing vigilance and care; and “by the Grace of God that was given me,” have planted a Church of CHRIST in the midst of you. The glad tidings of the Gospel were sent from my lips to your awakened hearts: you were taught to see, and feel, and relinquish the vanity and corruption of your fallen life, and to look for and experience the birth and growth of an Heavenly Nature within you. To this Heavenly Nature, I administered such mild and gentle food and nourishment, as I knew was best suited to its tender opening state. In this situation I left you to the Grace of CHRIST, and the affectionate labours of those other Apostles and preachers, who seconded my ministry among you. The labours of Apollos and Cephas were

were as necessary to your growth in Grace, as mine : for as ye "are God's husbandry, as ye are God's "building," so God hath bestowed different talents and endowments on those several labourers or workmen, whom he chooseth to employ for the culture of his vineyard, and for the progress and completion of his great spiritual edifice. "We are all, therefore, "labourers together with God." We have all our different tasks allotted us by the great Husband-man and Master builder, under whom we labour, and from whom alone we receive strength and wisdom to execute his will. My business was to plant, Apollos's to water; but what could it avail to plant or to water, unless God gave the increase? The Sun of Righteousness must shed his genial light and warmth, and the Divine Spirit must breathe its refreshing gales upon the tender plants, or they will wither and die. "He that planteth, and he that "watereth, therefore, are one," united in the same blessed work. The culture, growth, and perfection of the plant, are equally the care and concern of both, though their business or employment in this work be different. Paul and Apollos, and Cephas, are only "ministers, by whom ye believed, even as "the LORD gave to every man," and prospered their several labours. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, are yours: they are equally concerned, and equally laborious, for your Growth in Grace, though their particular talents and exercises may be different. Away then with your vain and unchristian distinctions! for the planter, and the waterer, are equally necessary, and equally estimable. Consider them always in these characters; entertain an equal love and respect for them all; and beg of your Heavenly Father to give increase to their respective labours."

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I need not take up your time, my brethren, in endeavouring to ascertain the peculiar and characteristic gifts of these several Apostles: this would neither augment, nor diminish the weight of the argument. Whatever these gifts were, they were not their own, but only intrusted to them by JESUS CHRIST, for accomplishing his own wise and salutary purposes towards the children of men. Some might be eminent for one kind of usefulness, and some for another. But it is probable, that those who possessed such talents, as most captivated the attention and affections of animal nature, were most followed; and this merely on account of the talents themselves, without any respect to those spiritual salutary truths, which, through them, were intended to be conveyed to the hearers.

This conduct, however, is not peculiar to the Corinthians. The same evil carnal principle, that raised so many unchristian animosities in that infant church, has ever since been working in every part of Christendom. It is the fatal source of all that variety of sects, opinions and doctrines, into which the outward church has been, and is still, sadly divided. But Truth is One—it has been so from the beginning, and will continue so for ever. The different sentiments and conceptions of mankind about Truth, can no more alter its nature, or make it cease to be what it is, than the looking through a variety of glasses of different colours, forms, and densities, can change the real colour, form, and proportion of objects. Every man admires and esteems his own glass most; and not content with this, quarrels with his neighbour, because he does not make use of it as well himself. This is but too true a picture of the present state of Christianity—while its professors are disputing and differing about their own peculiar opinions and notions

notions of Truth, which are no better than the glasses through which they contemplate it, they lose sight of the fair and beauteous object itself.

The ministers of JESUS CHRIST ought to have but one end in view, and that is, the conversion of hearts to his Redeeming Love. Their talents for this great work may differ as much as their persons; but by this diversity of gifts, they are better enabled to do the different kinds of work that are necessary to be done in their master's vineyard. They should be careful, however, not to run before they are sent, not to intrude upon the labours of their brethren, but be content to be employed in a way suitable to their peculiar talents, and in the field which Heaven hath assigned them. He that planteth, should be sent out only to plant; he that watereth, to water; he that giveth milk, should continue to give it till he has something stronger to give, and his hearers are better able to receive it. At the same time, neither he that planteth, nor he that watereth, neither he that giveth milk, nor he that giveth strong meat, should interfere with, depreciate, or counteract each other's peculiar work; but rather should faithfully and lovingly co-operate in the use of his particular gifts and experiences, to edify and perfect the body of CHRIST.

Were ministers thus tender, charitable, affectionate, and helpful to each other, were they truly fellow-labourers in CHRIST, it is more than probable, that there would be less divisions and jealousies among the people. Much depends, under God, upon their prudence and forbearance with respect to each other: and though such is the corruption and perverseness of human nature, that the closest union among themselves may not entirely prevent disputes among
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their hearers (as was the case at Corinth, though the Apostles did, no doubt, affectionately harmonize in all their labours) yet such an union would have a great tendency to heal or disperse them.

But how dreadful must be the consequences, when any ambitious aspiring preachers do themselves raise and foment these divisions; when they limit the Mercies of **JESUS**, and call upon men to join and associate themselves to their particular sect or party; as if the streams of Spiritual Life had left every other channel which Providence had opened, and, by their direction, taken entirely to one of their own construction!—If a preacher of this class happens to possess any popular talents, he is capable of abusing them to great mischief—to impose his own doctrines and opinions upon the ignorant multitude, by first captivating their passions, and then leading their judgments and consciences as he pleases. Many a soul has been awakened, indeed, under such preachers, but few have attained to any solid or substantial piety. Their minds have been kept in bondage to certain peculiarities of doctrine and practice, but their hearts and wills have never been surrendered to their true and only Master **JESUS CHRIST**. They have blindly followed the commandments of men, of their clamorous and enflamed leaders; but have neglected the weightier matters of Love, Peace, and Spiritual Union with **CHRIST** and all true Christians. Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, they are ready enough to magnify and extol; but the Master of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, they too easily forget—their attention and affections are too much engaged by the instrument, to observe and adore the Hand by which it is, or ought to be, directed.

To conclude this head: As the best of teachers, even the Apostles themselves, found it so difficult to controul

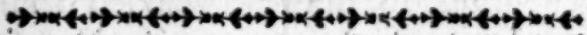
controul the passions and prejudices of men, and disengage them from partial distinctions and preferences among their ministers; how careful should all ministers be, to inculcate the Apostolical doctrine contained in this chapter, upon their hearers! to caution them against depending upon, or glorying in man; against trusting to the piety, zeal, or elocution, of the most liberal teachers, and much more against giving up their consciences to those, whose views are partial and confined, and who publickly avow them to be such, by endeavouring to draw a deluded multitude into the narrow limits of their own misguided sect. How often should they remind their hearers, that they are no more than their servants, men of like passions with themselves, though selected by Divine Providence to convey the glad tidings of Salvation to their hearts; that they can, at most, but plant and water; nor even this, without the continuance of Divine assistance; but that it is to God alone they must look for an increase!

O my brethren! let these truths sink deep into your hearts. Without a thorough conviction of them, all the preaching in the world will be of no service to you. You may hear a sermon every day, and every hour in the week, and be as far from CHRIST as ever, if you continue to depend upon preaching and preachers alone for your salvation. The utmost they can do, is to direct you to CHRIST. Regard them only when they give you this advice. Value them not for their natural or even spiritual endowments; you may be deceived in both. The surest and most profitable way you can take, is to consider them as mere planters and waterers; and to follow them, so far only as they follow CHRIST.



DISCOURSE XIII.

THE RICHES, PRIVILEGES, AND HONOURS OF THE CHRISTIAN.



I COR. CHAP. iii. VER. 21, 22, 23.

“ THEREFORE LET NO MAN GLORY IN MEN,
“ FOR ALL THINGS ARE YOURS: WHETHER
“ PAUL, OR APOLLOS, OR CEPHAS, OR THE
“ WORLD, OR LIFE, OR DEATH, OR THINGS
“ PRESENT, OR THINGS TO COME; ALL ARE
“ YOURS, AND YE ARE CHRIST’S, AND
“ CHRIST IS GOD’S.”

THE scope and design of the Blessed Apostle in this passage of his epistle, together with the true meaning and import of his general proposition, “ All things are yours,” hath been already explained in my first discourse from these words. In my second discourse, I entered upon the consideration of those particular privileges of the Christian, which are enumerated under this general head: and as the first of these privileges had a more immediate and striking reference to the great end he here had in view, which was to convince the Corinthians of the sin and folly of attaching themselves to particular and favourite preachers;

preachers; I enlarged upon this head, and endeavoured to prove, that Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, and all other ministers of the Gospel, were no more than the servants of their brethren; that they were "theirs" by a particular privilege, inasmuch as their office, their labours, talents, and several endowments, were entrusted to them for no other purpose, but that God, through them, might communicate "the unspeakable riches of his Grace" to the whole body of Christians. In this character, and in this alone, they were all equally entitled to their esteem and love, but not to any personal preference, or undue exaltation of one above another.

Not content with this, however, the good Apostle, under the full inspiration of Divine Truth, and the glorious enlargement of Divine Love, breaks forth into a further declaration of those still higher privileges, to which the meanest member of the church of CHRIST is equally and in common entitled, with the greatest and most advanced believers: not only "Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, are yours, but "the world, and life, and death, and things present, "and things to come; all are yours, and ye are "CHRIST's, and CHRIST is God's."

"The world is yours!"—Is it so, thou Blessed Apostle? Alas! this strange assertion seems not to be confirmed, either by thine own experience, or the experience of thy fellow-labourers; or of any of those, who have since trod in the footsteps of thy Suffering Master. If bonds and imprisonments, if stripes and persecutions of various kinds, if cruel mockings and insults, if outward and inward tribulations might be admitted as proofs of their having the world in their power, these, indeed, will not be found wanting. Sad privilege, indeed! Wretched consolation! to
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be told that misery is our portion, and that distress and affliction are the Christian's birth-right!—Let us, however, endeavour to solve this seeming paradox, and reconcile the Apostle's declaration with the common experience of Christians.

Whence was it, O Christian! (for I now appeal to the real sensibilities of every believing soul that has tasted of the Good Word of God) whence was it, that thou hast acquired that power and dominion over the world, by which thou canst sustain its adversity and prosperity, its evil and its good, with equal calmness, fortitude, and complacency?—for this is that power and dominion, by which alone the world becomes thine! Was it not by those very sufferings, which seem so diametrically opposite to this triumphant state? Thy victory rose from thy defeat; thy consolation, from the depth of thy distress; thy conquest of the world, from its conquest of thee.—Yea, the world furnished thee with arms against itself. Every new affliction gave thee some new acquisition; every sigh, every tear, vanquished some mortal foe.

Bonds and imprisonments, scourging and insults, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, war, pestilence, and shipwreck, and all the dire vicissitudes which the world can bring upon us, serve no other purpose than to subdue the pride, envy, covetousness, and wrath of our fallen life; to open the eyes of our inward man, and teach us to look upon this world in its proper light, to fly its visionary pleasures, and support with patience its substantial miseries.

To suffer, therefore, is to triumph; to be distressed, is our glorious privilege; to “be weary and heavy-laden,” is the only way to rest and happiness!

pinefs! Sure I am, that there are many here, who can bear witness to this great and awful truth; who can say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." My God hath manifested his love in all my sufferings. I should never have come to the knowledge of his Truth; I should never have experienced the Light of his Grace; I should never have overcome the world, abandoned its delusive prospects, and gained a sure and everlasting inheritance; had not my God made this very world to frown upon me, had he not beset me with its troubles behind and before, and by making me deeply sensible of its evil, taught me to despise even its good. Thus, and thus alone, "the world is the Christian's," because he knows, that every thing in it, under the administration of his BLESSED REDEEMER, is made subservient to his real happiness, which he is convinced is more effectually promoted by its storms than by its calms, by its frowns than by its smiles.

And if "the world" is thus his, by particular privilege, consequently "the Life" which he lives in it must be so too. The vicissitudes of life arise from the natural instability of worldly enjoyments: but even this instability the believer knows to be under the immediate Guidance of ALMIGHTY LOVE. The real enjoyment of life depends upon the temper and disposition of mind, with which its vicissitudes are received. The Christian, therefore, who knows that "not an hair of his head can fall to the ground without his heavenly Father," and whose will is secretly resigned to his Father's, meekly and patiently, daily and hourly giving himself up to his sovereign disposal, he alone can be said to have a true enjoyment of life.—In sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, he alike beholds the hand of his

his REDEEMER opening to him, by these various dispensations, the way to never ending rest; unfolding his misery by nature, and his happiness by Grace, and rendering every change of outward life instrumental to some blessed change in the life of his inward and spiritual man.

But he has not only the highest enjoyment of this "world," and of "life" in this world, but what is a still more surprising and more glorious privilege, "death too is his." Not, indeed, in the sense in which it belongs to the wicked and unregenerate, to whom it is solely the consequence of guilt, and the dreadful introduction to misery extreme. No—to the real Christian, it is the consequence of a new life, the completion of happiness, the deliverer from woe, the gate that opens into Paradise, the messenger of REDEEMING LOVE. Death, therefore, is the believer's, because, by the strength of his REDEEMER, he hath been enabled to make him, who was once his enemy, become his reconciled friend: he hath dropped his envenomed sting; and his dart flies now for no other use, but a kind and friendly one, even to dislodge the heavenly inhabitant from its frail tabernacle of clay, and open the world of light upon its spiritual senses.

But still higher privileges, still higher prospects, open to the Apostle's view. "Things present and things to come are yours."—Whatever the present moment brings to light, as well as what is concealed in the womb of futurity, is equally in the Christian's power. He is prepared to receive the former with thankfulness and gratitude, because he knows, that it must operate for his good, be it painful or pleasant: and from the same conviction of the kind and loving Administration of his REDEEMER, he can wait
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with patience and resignation for the future dispensations of his Providence.

I cannot, however, but think, that these words have a much deeper and more comfortable sense than this. "Things present, and things to come," generally denote, in Scripture, the visible and the invisible world; and though they are equally present, yet, with respect to our common apprehensions, the latter must be called future, because it cannot be unveiled to our senses, till we have laid aside these garments of sin. The believer, however, by virtue of his Heavenly Nature, united by Faith to his REDEEMER, stands in the heavenly world at the same time that he is in this. Its light, and life, and air, its powers, and virtues, and glories, are opening themselves, though invisibly, in his heart. Hence it is, that the Apostle speaks of "tasting the powers of the world to come," even in this present state, and that not metaphorically, but as really and physically as our outward bodies may be said to taste the powers of this present world. O what an high and glorious privilege does this appear, when considered in this point of light! An Heavenly Man within us, standing upon heavenly ground, breathing the heavenly air, and rising, by its animating influences, far above this sink of evil and corruption, in which the earthly nature still remains a prisoner; and with heavenly fortitude and resignation, supporting the painful union, till his true parent and deliverer rescues him from his captivity, and admits him into the liberty of kindred spirits in glory.

Well, therefore, might the Apostle, at the close of this enumeration, again repeat his general assertion, "All things are yours."—But he repeats it, not only with a view of impressing the truth more

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powerfully

powerfully upon the hearts of Christians, but also to let them know, that their privileges are in the most effectual manner secured to them; that their title is indisputable, their inheritance unfading and eternal—
 “And ye are CHRIST’s,” says he.

Think not, that your title to this inheritance is founded upon any thing in yourselves, considered separately and distinctly in your own natures; no, “Ye are by nature dead in trespasses and sin—The wages of sin is death.” No other inheritance, but destruction and misery, can you derive from your fallen nature. This inheritance, therefore, which is “eternal life,” is solely the gift of God, through JESUS CHRIST. “Ye are CHRIST’s,” therefore, not only as being originally created by him in his own image, which image ye lost by sin; but ye are now his by REDEMPTION, which is in truth a second creation; for he hath planted his own seed in your fallen nature. By this, he is become your Father, your Spiritual Regenerator, your Creator anew in Righteousness and true Holiness.—Thus, by turning your will to this SAVIOUR, the heavenly seed springs forth, under his mild and genial influences, into a beautiful plant, partaking of all the virtues, powers, odours, and colours of its eternal Parent, uniting, rejoicing, and living for ever in the same Heavenly Glory.

Nay, that your faith, and hope, and love, may rest upon an eternal ground, and that your title may appear to you still more firm, and your inheritance still more certain and glorious; I must tell you, that as “Ye are CHRIST’s, so CHRIST is God’s.”—Here rests the glorious climax, rising by a fair and beautiful gradation, till its last step is fixed to the throne of the Highest!

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The essential powers, virtues and excellencies of the Invisible and Supernatural God, manifest themselves in his eternal and only-begotten Son JESUS CHRIST, GOD of GOD, GOD MAN, uniting himself to human nature, redeeming, glorifying, and exalting it, with himself, to the throne of the Eternal Father: from thence they are communicated, in copious streams of light and love, to the whole race whom he has condescended to redeem; awakening, illuminating, sanctifying, restoring, and investing them with the same kind of powers and excellencies, which he possesses himself in an infinite degree, and thus accomplishing what he before had prayed to his heavenly Father might be accomplished —“ That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art
“ in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one
“ in us—that they may be ONE, even as we are ONE
“ —I in them, and thou in me, that they may be
“ made perfect in ONE.”

Thus have you seen, my brethren, the nature, extent, and excellency of the great Christian privileges here enumerated, together with the eternal and unmoveable foundation on which they are built. Need I, therefore, now call upon you to put in your claim to this vast inheritance? Alas! I fear there is too much occasion for the most solemn calls.—So various are the pursuits of the sons of men, and so foreign to their real happiness; so mistaken are they in their conceptions of good, so blind to real evil, so easily deluded by specious appearances, and led astray by so many false lights; so prone to obey the dictates of a corrupt nature, and so averse to every thing that is spiritual and heavenly; that the weightiest Truths of the Gospel, the most animating promises, the most glorious privileges there recounted, seem to have but very little influence upon their

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hearts.

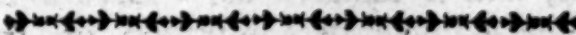
hearts. O why, my brethren, why will ye "spend
" your money for that which is not bread, and your
" labour for that which satisfieth not?" why, with
deluded Esau, "will you sell your birth-right for a
" mess of pottage," an heavenly for an earthly in-
heritance? When "all things are yours," why will
you take up with the scanty provisions which a poor
perishing nature can give? An immortal soul, re-
deemed by the blood of the Son of God, spending its
strength, exerting its faculties in the pursuit of such
fleeting momentary enjoyments as this world can af-
ford, is a spectacle at which Angels might weep—O
that every thoughtless sinner might be induced to
weep for himself, to mourn his wretched forlorn con-
dition; and from a deep conviction of the insufficiency
of all earthly possessions to make him happy, that he
might be led to seek that "peace of God which pas-
" seth all understanding! that inheritance immortal,
" incorruptible, and undefiled, which fadeth not
" away!"

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DISCOURSE XIV.

CHRIST, KNOWN OR UNKNOWN, THE
UNIVERSAL SAVIOUR,



St. JOHN, CHAP. xiv. Part of VER. 9.

“ HAVE I BEEN SO LONG TIME WITH YOU,
“ AND YET HAST THOU NOT KNOWN ME,
“ PHILIP ?”

“ **E**XCEPT ye see signs and wonders, ye will
“ not believe,” said our BLESSED LORD to
those earthly-minded Israelites, who were ever looking
for some external display of supernatural power, as
the only means of conviction in matters of religion.
This fatal mistake hath prevailed too much in the
world ; and still maintains its ground, even among
those, whose views are more spiritual, and who have
been taught to look upon religion as an internal
operation, the work of GOD’S SPIRIT upon their
souls. They do not, indeed, seek for an outward
sign, as the Jews of old did ; they see the improp-
riety of this under a spiritual dispensation : their de-
lusion, however, though perhaps more refined, is
equally dangerous. They cannot conceive that the
Divine Power and Presence can be manifested to the
human

human soul, in any other way, than by extraordinary impressions, visions, or extasies. Thus, whilst they are looking out for the appearance of their God in a whirlwind, a fire, or an earthquake, their attention is wholly withdrawn from that "Still Small Voice," in which he usually addresses himself to the hearts of his creatures.

Such was the sad delusion under which poor Philip seems to have laboured. "Lord, shew us the Father," said he, and it sufficeth us." Give us some visible sign, some sensible demonstration of the Father's power and presence with thee. Let him rend the heavens and come down; and if thou art indeed his Son, let him own and honour thee as such, by placing himself near to thy sacred person, and breaking forth in a flood of glory upon our outward senses. Poor mistaken disciple! Little didst thou think of the dreadful consequences which might have attended the granting of thy request. It might have over-whelmed thy weak nature, but could never have wrought any salutary conviction in thy soul: thy outward senses could not have sustained the shock, and thy mind would have continued as dark as ever, notwithstanding the heavenly effulgence that surrounded thee.

Ignorant, weak, and deluded, as Philip seems to have been, his BLESSED MASTER bore with his infirmities, and answered him with all that sweetness and gentleness, that usually accompanied even his censures and reproofs—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. How sayest thou then, shew us the Father?"

Not

Not one of all those excellencies and perfections, which constitute the Divine Nature, but thou mightest have beheld manifested in me. The healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, making the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the dumb to speak, instructing the ignorant, and preaching the gospel to the poor, all these are the surest marks and evidences that can possibly be given of the immediate presence of the Divinity within me. He, therefore, who hath seen me thus manifesting the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of my Heavenly Father, in these works of wonder, tenderness, and love to his children, "hath seen the Father;" inasmuch, as in the present state of things, there is no other way in which God can manifest himself to you his fallen creatures, but by awakening your attention to every act and sensibility of goodness, which you may discover either in yourselves or others. And as all these divine communications are imparted from the Father through me; so in my miracles, life and conversation, had you yielded a proper attention, you might have seen "the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the "Express Image of his Person." "Have I been so "long time with you, and yet hast thou not known "me, Philip?"

From this particular conversation of our LORD with his disciple, as well as from the whole tenor of the Gospel, arises this grand and fundamental truth: that our real knowledge of CHRIST depends upon an attention of the mind to those Tempers, Qualities, Dispositions and Actions, which he manifested in his life here upon earth, and which are recorded in Scripture for our instruction, accompanied with a surrender of our will and affections to those inward calls, motions, and sensibilities of Goodness, by which he reveals himself with all his heavenly tempers
in

in our hearts. CHRIST, therefore, makes himself known to us in these two principal ways, in his Word, and in our Hearts.

His Word, or what is known by the name of the Holy Scriptures, is only the outward testimony—the rule or standard providentially transmitted to us, by which we are to judge of the reality of his Presence in our Hearts. It tells us of a CHRIST, who lived, and suffered, and died in our human nature, in order to teach us how to live, and suffer, and die. It assures us, that our everlasting salvation depends upon our knowledge of this CHRIST; that this knowledge can only be attained by seeking him earnestly; that the place where he chuses to be found, where he loves to reside, is in the human heart; that “his kingdom is within us;” that he is “the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;” that he is “the hope of glory,” in every son and daughter of fallen Adam.

The Scriptures likewise testify of the manner of his appearance and residence within us—that he manifests himself as a destroyer of that evil work, which the Devil has wrought in our nature; first convincing us of sin, of the darkness and misery of our fallen life, and then pointing out to us the paths of righteousness; opening and unfolding all those sweet and lovely qualities, of which himself is the great fountain spirit, and which he distributes to every man according to his capacity and desire of receiving them.

To know CHRIST, therefore, is carefully to cultivate those holy and heavenly tempers and dispositions, which he manifested in his outward life here upon earth, and which he now continues to manifest in

in the breasts of all those who diligently seek after him. To know CHRIST, is to know and feel the power of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Wherever these Graces take up their residence, there is the Temple of JESUS. These are the ministering servants that wait at his altar: and the sacrifices which they there present and offer, are all the earthly and diabolical passions with which human nature is polluted and oppressed,—pride, envy, covetousness, jealousy, lust, wrath, bitterness of spirit, and all the rest of the infernal legion. Love, Love Divine, is the vestal fire which there burns pure and perpetual; which cleanses, refines, sublimates, and glorifies every thing that comes within its reach.

In this sense, CHRIST has been a long time, indeed, among the sons of men, though they may not have known him: He has been long "come to his own," though his own have not universally received him. Where is the man, who hath not, in innumerable instances, felt the powerful suggestions of vice; and in innumerable instances, been inwardly warned against them, and pressed to the exercise of virtue?

Speak, thou unthinking, careless mortal! Hast thou never felt thyself swoln with pride, or burning with envy? Hast thou never coveted, been jealous, angry, revengeful, bitter, and implacable? Hast thou never found thyself bound to this world, by such strong and numerous ties, that the parting from it would be like tearing away thy very heart-strings? Amidst all that storm and confusion, into which this restless croud of evil passions has frequently thrown thee, hast thou never once felt a monitor within, that would have let thee know, if thou hadst at-

tended to his voice, that all this uproar was from an evil principle, and that thou wert injuring thy soul by submitting to its power?

Haft thou never been led to admire and revere the amiable graces of Meekness, Humility, Love, and Peace, in the life of thy neighbour; and secretly to wish, that these plants of Heaven would spring up in thy own barren soil? Haft thou not frequently envied the happy frame and circumstances of some, whom thou hast seen devout and pious in their conduct towards God, and affectionate, mild, and gentle in their behaviour towards their brethren? And hast thou not, in such a situation, been constrained to sigh out some such wish as this: O that I could feel, and live, and act as these men seem to do! Would to God that this evil nature of mine, with all its horrid lusts and passions, was wholly subdued, eradicated, or changed!

Let me tell thee, then, poor mortal! that all these senses, sensibilities, and secret desires, are from CHRIST, and that this is the way he takes to invite thee to his friendship and communion. He is in thine heart, waiting there with all the condescension, tenderness, and compassion of a most indulgent father, to deliver thee from thy sins, and shew himself to thy soul in reconciliation and peace. He hath been waiting there ever since thou wert born, seeking to make himself known to thee, sometimes by the frowns of conscience, sometimes by its approving smiles, sometimes by the endearing intercourse of Christian friendship and love, and sometimes by the sweet emotions of his own Charity, kindled within thee, at the sight of an object in distress; sometimes by providential deliverances from imminent dangers, sometimes by providential visits of health and prosperity.

perity. Whence is it then, O sinner, that, though thy SAVIOUR hath been so long time "with thee, yet hast thou not known him?" Whence is it, though he has made thee such frequent offers of his Love, thou hast still slighted or rejected them?

Various are the obstacles and impediments which prevent us from coming to a true and saving knowledge of CHRIST. In some persons, the unrestrained sovereignty and dominion of fallen nature, leads them captive at its will, makes them deaf to the voice of conscience, and blind to every ray of light that seeks to illuminate the dark region of their heart. They know not CHRIST, because they have not the least desire to be acquainted with him.

In others, the grand and principal impediment to the knowledge of CHRIST, is their absolute dependence upon an external decency of conduct, to which they have given the name of morality. If they cultivate those seeming virtues, which are the faint images or shadows of the True Graces of the Gospel, it is solely from a selfish principle, a desire of being noticed and respected by the world; they have no view, in any thing they undertake, to that real inward change of heart and temper, in which alone the Knowledge of CHRIST consists. Such persons, being unacquainted with the intrinsic evil and corruption of their own nature, cannot have the least desire to be delivered from it; and, till they are providentially awakened to a sense of this, they cannot find themselves disposed to enquire after a Saviour, in and through whom alone these evils and corruptions are to be healed or removed.

Others again there are, who are kept from this saving knowledge of CHRIST, by an attachment

to external forms, modes, and opinions of religion; who, provided they are found faithful in the observance and belief of these, excuse themselves from the cultivation of those inward and heavenly graces and virtues, which alone constitute the life and power of religion. Such persons frequently fall into the grossest inconsistencies. They can be angry, in the defence of meekness; proud, whilst they are discouraging on humility; and can speak of all the sublime truths of religion, and sometimes of its vital influences on the heart, with the utmost elegance and pathos of sentiment and expression, and yet remain totally insensible of their efficacy respecting themselves. Such persons know not CHRIST, because they do not seek him in the only way in which he can be found, viz. in a conformity to his Heavenly Character.

The last impediment which I shall mention, that excludes many serious minds from the knowledge of CHRIST'S personal power and presence with them, is that under which poor Philip laboured; even an expectation of some unusual display of supernatural agency, to produce their conviction and conversion.—He, indeed, looked for an external sign; they are anxious for something internal and spiritual; but the nature of the desire is the same in both, and is equally delusive and dangerous. Such persons, solicitous for nothing but an assurance of the forgiveness of God, expect to have it communicated by some vision, ecstasy, or sudden illumination.

Far be it from me to call in question the reality of such manifestations, which good men in all ages have experienced. But at the same time I must confess, that I cannot look upon them as essential to Salvation. CHRIST JESUS reveals himself to sinners in various methods, and by various means; but the end of all these

these means and methods is the same, even to produce his own Image of Righteousness and true Holiness in their hearts. Let us hear his own blessed words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"—Ye that labour under the evils of fallen life, seduced by its temptations, enslaved by its passions, and heavy-laden with its accumulated guilt and woe, come to me, deeply sensible of your deplorable condition, and earnestly desiring deliverance, and I will give you rest! From the same Oracle of Truth, we learn too, wherein this rest, deliverance, or forgiveness must consist—"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Meekness and lowliness of heart, therefore, is the true rest which CHRIST gives; for, wherever these are, there is Faith, there is Hope, there is Heaven-born Charity.

Tell me, ye favoured souls! who have been "called out of darkness into the marvellous light of God;" who have experienced his "Peace, that passeth all understanding;" who have received the sweetest tokens of his Forgiving Grace; tell me, wherein did this marvellous Light, this Peace, this token of Forgiving Grace consist? what kind of sensibility was awakened in you at that happy season?—Was it not a sensibility of Love intense, and Meekness unutterable? a Love, that would have clasped universal nature in its charitable embrace; a Meekness, that would have forgiven the grossest injuries and insults, and condescended to the meanest offices of tenderness and kindness to your brethren?

This, then, is the Knowledge of JESUS CHRIST. In this Gentle Element he delights to move! Let but your souls be attuned to these Divine Sensations,
and

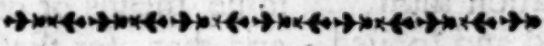
and CHRIST is yours! Seek not for any sudden and extraordinary impulses or ecstasies, but “learn to be meek and lowly in heart!” Ask for Divine Grace to subdue your corrupt and boisterous passions!—Be weary of, and groan under, the burden of your evil nature!—Fly from pride, envy, covetousness, and wrath; and cherish the opposite tempers of meekness, humility, resignation, and love!—Wander not after an imaginary forgiveness: but know assuredly, that there is no other way, in which the All-atoning Blood of the HOLY JESUS can be applied for the pardon of sin, but by inwardly cleansing, redeeming, and purifying your corrupt natures, from every bestial as well as diabolical impurity.

It is in this process alone, that you can know, and be known by your SAVIOUR: and unless you enter upon this, and seek in good earnest to be intimately acquainted with him, thus revealing himself in your hearts; he will one day have good reason to say to you, as he did to his disciple in the text, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me?”



DISCOURSE XV.

HUMAN LIFE A PILGRIMAGE.



PSALM XXXIX. Part of VER. 12.

“FOR I AM A STRANGER WITH THEE, AND
“A SOJOURNER, AS ALL MY FATHERS
“WERE.”

IN every age of the world, and among people of every nation and language under heaven, (if we may credit the testimony of history and experience) there have been found many virtuous, thoughtful, and enquiring minds; who, from an attentive observation of the moral as well as physical disorders incident to the present system of things, from a personal experience of the unavoidable miseries consequent thereupon, and from a secret irresistible desire and longing after some superior but unknown state of being, have been led to form these most philosophical and pious conclusions:

That their present mode of existence could not possibly be the same, for which they were originally intended by a being of Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Love; that the intelligent and immortal spirit
within

within them, could not have been created merely to animate a dark terrestrial body, and to be subject to the clamorous demands of animal nature; that the fair signatures of beauty, order, and love, which they still saw, and felt, and admired, within and without them, could not have been originally impressed by the Divine Fiat upon that mixture of darkness, deformity and confusion, in which they now appear; that the primeval harmony and lustre of the creation must, by some means or other, have been marred and spoiled; and that, for these reasons, they could not but consider themselves as the fallen inhabitants of a fallen world.

That these strange disorders must have proceeded solely from the depravity of some created intelligences, they concluded, not only from their own conceptions of the spotless purity and goodness of the Divine Nature, but from their own observation and experience of the innumerable evils that were produced in themselves and others, whenever their wills and affections deviated from the strait paths of virtue, and wandered in the mazes of vice. And yet they saw—and yet they felt—that so numerous and powerful were the temptations and suggestions on the side of vice, that nought but the kind interposition of their good and powerful CREATOR, nought but the supernatural illumination and direction of his BLESSED SPIRIT, could rescue them from the dominion of their passions, open their understanding to the sight of TRUTH, and incline their will to the pursuit and practice of GOODNESS. This affectionate intercourse with their CREATOR, they considered as the only source of their virtue and happiness in this life, as the only earnest of their future and final felicity in the next. Hence they regarded themselves as strangers and exiles in a foreign land, and
looked

looked upon death as the season of their deliverance, of their return to their native country, and reunion with their Father and kindred spirits in glory.

Many traces of this sublime philosophy do we meet with in the lives and writings of the virtuous heathens. For, however they may differ from us in their modes of conception and expression, a discerning mind will soon discover, that their feelings were congenial with our own; and that they wanted but the aids of external revelation to enable them to "speak what they knew, and testify what they saw," in the same language which we are instructed to use.

The Sacred Writings, however, afford us the noblest and most indubitable testimonies to the great truths mentioned above. For whatsoever scattered rays of knowledge or of goodness are found here and there gleaming through the shades of paganism;—whatsoever the thrice-great Hermes delivered as oracles from his sacred tripod;—whatsoever Pythagoras, Socrates, Epictetus, Zoroaster, or Confucius, have laboured to inculcate upon the hearts of their disciples—all this, and infinitely more, without any corrupt or superstitious mixture, do we find expressly revealed, with all the marks of Divine Authority, in the Holy Scriptures—all this, and infinitely more, do we find beautifully exemplified in those lives and sayings of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, which are recorded for our instruction and imitation in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

These venerable teachers and patterns of Truth and Virtue, do all, with one voice, express their deep sensibility of the evils and miseries of their present state of existence, and their ardent aspirations after another and a better state. They all, with one

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voice,

voice, acknowledge the vanity and insufficiency of every sublunary enjoyment, and the indispensable necessity of "setting the affections on things above, not on things on the earth." They all, with one voice, pronounce their state in this world to be that of strangers and exiles; and consider their temporary pilgrimage here, as only intended to purify and prepare them for a state of eternal peace and happiness hereafter. In a word, they all, with one voice, declare, that there is no other method, by which they can be redeemed from the evils of their present life, and qualified for the blessings of a future, but by a perpetual communion with the great FATHER OF THEIR SPIRITS, kept up on his part by kind and liberal effusions of his own essential goodness; and on theirs, by an affectionate and ardent inclination of their wills and desires towards him, and a grateful reception, and faithful improvement of his loving communications.

Under the Old Testament, this blessed intercourse was understood and felt by patriarchs and prophets, through the outward means of sacrifices, types, and various ceremonies and ordinances; all predictive and expressive of a certain Redeeming Process, which, "in the fulness of time," was to be accomplished for human nature, in the person of a suffering and triumphant MESSIAH. Under the New Testament, it broke forth, with meridian lustre, in the incarnation and nativity, life and conversation, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of the BLESSED JESUS; in whose sacred person the divine and human natures were most happily united, to the end, that as the SON OF MAN and the SON OF GOD, he might communicate to every Son of Man, that should receive his testimony, and believe in his Name, the power of becoming a SON OF GOD, John i. 12.

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His life and conversation upon earth must, therefore, be the true and only standard, by which ours is to be regulated. As he lived, so should we live also; and consider this world in the same point of view, and treat it in the same manner, that he did.

So far, indeed, as the worthies of the Old Testament have lived or spoken according to the spirit of his Gospel, so far, without doubt, we are bound to follow their example: and a very little acquaintance with Scripture will be sufficient to inform us, that "they did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and did all drink of the same spiritual drink," and had all entered upon the same Redeeming Process, with those, who have since lived under the Light of the Gospel, and have known and found this meat and drink to be no other than those spiritual emanations of Truth and Love, which we all receive, or may receive, from CHRIST OUR COMMON SAVIOUR.

When David, therefore, confessed, that he was "a stranger and a sojourner with God, as all his fathers were," what was this, but an express declaration, that, though he was encircled with a diadem, and clad in the robes of royalty; though he had his residence in the metropolis of Judea, and exercised an absolute sovereignty over the whole realm, he considered himself, nevertheless, as a stranger in a strange land, far distant from his native country, surrounded by a multitude of enemies, who were perpetually upon the watch to take advantage of any little mistake he might commit, perpetually in arms against him, and determined, if they possibly could, to rob him at once of his kingdom and his peace? What was it, but an humble

acknowledgment of his own spiritually helpless and indigent condition? and at the same time an affectionate intimation of his secret hope, that, as his forefathers had been in the same circumstances he was now in, and had experienced the kind interposition of Heaven for their relief and comfort, God would be graciously pleased to continue to him the same loving-kindness, accompany, support and protect him through his painful sojourn, and conduct him safe to those blessed abodes, which he had prepared for the reception of every true spiritual Israelite? "For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

Upon this view of things, and under the influence of these principles, he composed the pathetic psalm from whence my text is taken; which exhibits to us a lively representation of the vanity and shortness of human life, the difficulties that attend our pilgrimage through this world, the prudence and circumspection which the pilgrim must observe, the enemies he must expect to encounter on the way, and the confidence he must repose in the strength of a superior and Almighty arm, in order to secure to himself Success and Victory.

The truth of this representation we find abundantly confirmed by the whole tenor of Scripture. The grand apostate seraph is there called "the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air;" from which, and other expressions of the like import, we may justly conclude, that he was once in possession of this very system which we inhabit—it was the sphere of glory, in which he moved, whilst his lustre yet remained unfaded. Envious, jealous of its new inhabitants, he is perpetually "walking about, seeking whom he may devour." He avails him-
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self of that earthly nature which we inherit from our fallen ancestor, insinuates himself through its foul channels into our inmost hearts, seduces us from the steps of innocence and virtue, and unless timely rescued by a Superior Power, will hurry us headlong into the depths of his own dark and fiery kingdom.

On the other hand, the God of LIGHT and LOVE, who reigns supreme in his own KINGDOM of LIGHT and LOVE, is most affectionately anxious for our preservation. For this gracious purpose, he causes his light to shine forth in the midst of our darkness; discovers to us the secret hostile intentions of our malicious enemy; calls upon us to fly from his infernal wiles; and invites us to walk with himself in his own delightful element, with sweet assurances of peace and consolation here, and glory, honour, and immortality hereafter.

Ill fares the man, whose mistaken heart too easily opens to the false friendship of his flattering foe—he walks upon enchanted ground—there is no reality in the surrounding scene—every object is visionary—the flowers have no real fragrance, the fruits no real flavour or nourishment.—He plucks and eats, but still remains unsatisfied—he plucks and eats again—he discovers the delusion, and yet the delusion pleases him.—The wily enchanter leads him at one time into the gardens of pleasure—at another, conducts him to the pompous edifice of ambition—at another, opens upon his ravished sight the splendid treasures, which Mammon offers to his foolish votaries.—With this pretended friend and guardian he walks the tiresome round, pleased and transported with every new prospect, but loathing the objects as soon as possessed. In the mean while, the calls of a superior nature are
totally

totally disregarded, and the soul is suffered to famish within the pampered body.

Not so the wise and virtuous candidate for sublimer joys. His breast is no sooner penetrated by a ray of that Universal Light, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," than it opens, with cheerfulness and gratitude, to receive more and more of the salutary effulgence. He finds within himself a source of sensibilities, which correspond to a world of objects far more real and sublime, than aught that meets his outward senses in this shadowy scene. He finds, he feels the presence of a true friend and guardian, whose unlimited power can controul the open or secret attacks of his false friend and seducer; whose wisdom can furnish him with every kind of knowledge that is necessary to his real felicity; and whose ineffable love is perpetually feeding and refreshing the angel that is within him, with such fruits and flowers as are of celestial growth, and suited to its celestial frame. With this GUARDIAN GOD, he walks the wilds of nature, unappalled, regardless alike of the smiles and frowns of his spiritual adversaries. He considers himself as a stranger and sojourner in this vale of misery; and under the conduct of Unerring Wisdom, and Almighty Love, pursues his painful pleasing journey to a better country, even an heavenly one.

But this is not all. Care, prudence, circumspection, and confidence in God, are not only indispensably necessary to secure to us a safe and happy pilgrimage through life; but they are likewise the best, the only preparatives for an happy and comfortable death.

As strangers and sojourners, we ought to live under a constant expectation of being called home to our native country. This expectation will be either pleasing

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or painful, according as we are more or less prepared for the awful summons. The summons we cannot dispense with: the time in which it may be pronounced, is altogether uncertain.

Some of us, within a very few years, and some, perhaps, within a very few days, may behold the curtain drop, and shut out every scene of temporal nature from our view. With respect to us, "the heavens and the earth will then pass away with a mighty noise; the sun will be darkened, and the moon turned into blood; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken." Death, judgment, heaven, or hell, will then be realized to our disembodied spirits. "He that is holy will be holy still, and he that is filthy will be filthy still." The dissolution of this outward body will close the season of Divine Grace; the hopes or the fears, the happiness or the misery of man, will be determined by his expiring breath; and his God will be manifested to him, either in the mild majesty of his Love, or in the consuming fire of his Wrath.

What adds to the solemnity of this dread moment, is the frequent suddenness of its approach. The king of terrors often knocks at the door, when the master of the house is by no means prepared for the awful visit. Nay, he frequently passes by the habitations of age, infirmity and distress, and thunders forth his tremendous summons in the ears of the young, the gay, and the robust. Neither superior fortune, nor superior station, can protract the fleeting date of life. The monarch tumbles from his throne; and, after the momentary honours of a pompous funeral, makes his bed in the dust, and lies there as poor and undistinguished as the late tenant of the homely cottage. Even piety and virtue cannot screen their votaries from

from death's unerring shaft; but he is sometimes permitted to snatch away the most amiable patterns of both, in order to awaken the attention, or chastise the carelessness, of their friends and neighbours.

Happy would it be for mankind, if these frequent indiscriminate strokes did but produce a more general and serious attention to "the things that belong to their peace;" and happy for you, my dear brethren, if the solemn truths that have now been delivered, are permitted to have a due weight and influence on your lives and practice!

Examine yourselves, then, by these principles. Look well into the present state of your souls. Be these important reflections continually present to your minds; that you are but "strangers and sojourners upon earth;" that every object, that attracts and engages your desires and affections here, must very shortly be removed from you for ever; that it is folly and madness to take up your rest in such poor perishable things, as the present world affords, inasmuch as death must soon put an end to their shadowy forms, and translate you to a world, where all is real—all is eternal.

Do not deceive yourselves. A gay and thoughtless life is no suitable preparation for death. The heart must be gradually estranged from the vanities of time, before it can turn its desires towards the riches of eternity. You have heard of the difficulties you may expect to meet with, of the enemies you will have to encounter, on your way to heaven. Up, then, and be doing. No time is to be lost. Every moment is precious: it carries Heaven on its wing. The victory is secure, if you will but arm yourselves for the conflict. Your Heavenly FATHER is perpetually drawing and
inviting

inviting you to enter the lists, and contend for the prize. His Eternal SON hath promised to be with you, and in you. And the blessed SPIRIT, proceeding from both, will inspire you with all that celestial strength and ardour, which alone can render you "more than conquerors." Thus are you furnished, from the armoury of heaven, with a divine panoply, which, upon trial, you will find impenetrable to "all the fiery darts of the wicked."

"Fear not, then, thou worm, Jacob! Be not dismayed, for thy God is with thee!" Blessed encouragement, this! What though you are strangers and sojourners upon earth, yet remember for your consolation, that you are strangers and sojourners with God—"For I am a stranger and sojourner WITH THEE."

O MY brethren! what ineffable peace and satisfaction would spring up in your hearts, could you once realize to yourselves, could you once feel, the perpetual presence of an OMNIPOTENT God, travelling with you on the journey of life, supplying all your wants, supporting you under all your difficulties and distresses, and, with the affectionate fondness of a father, minutely entering into all your real interests and concerns! To know, that you are his offspring, fallen indeed, but redeemed by his BLESSED SON; that his love for you is so ardent, that "whoso toucheth you his children, toucheth the apple of his eye; that in all your afflictions he is afflicted, and that the angel of his presence saves and delivers you; that he will never leave you comfortless, but will be with you always, even to the end of the world!" These are such sweet and delightful assurances, as you could never have collected from the vain reasonings of worldly philosophy, or the vain confidence, which

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many pretend to derive from mere unassisted human virtue.

Upon this ground you may rest secure; and, in the strength of an Almighty arm, bid defiance to the open assaults or secret stratagems of the enemies of your peace. Whilst the **SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** continues to impart his chearing beams, and fountains of living water spring up on every side to refresh the weary pilgrim, you may pursue your journey, with peace and confidence, through the **VALLEY OF BACA**; you may "lift up your heads with joy, as the Ransomed of the LORD," and "proceed from strength to strength, till you appear before the God of Gods in SION."

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DISCOURSE XVI.

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD INTERNAL AND PRACTICAL.

JOB, CHAP. xlii. VER. 5, 6.

"I HAVE HEARD OF THEE BY THE HEARING
"OF THE EAR; BUT NOW HATH MINE EYE
"SEEN THEE: THEREFORE I ABHOR MY-
"SELF, AND REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES."

WE can scarcely open any part of the Scriptures, but we meet with the following great and leading truths of Religion: viz. that the LOVE OF GOD is universal; that his "GRACE which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all men;" that he hath given a "manifestation of his Spirit to every man, to profit withal;" that "God so loved the world, that he hath given his ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life;" that he is "the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" that God "wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would be converted and live;" that his call has been, and now is to
U 2 "every

"every man," every where "to repent;" and that every man may partake of this Universal Love, may be saved by this "Grace which hath appeared," may profit by the manifestation which he hath given.

To these great and leading truths we are continually called and exhorted to attend; and that there is a possibility of attending and yielding to them, is implied in the very nature and spirit of the declarations themselves. For, certainly, all is in vain—the call to all in vain, the appearance of Grace to all in vain, the gift and manifestation of the Spirit to every one in vain, and the shining of the Light in vain, if fallen man is not put into a capacity of obeying it, and walking therein.

"Man's destruction is of himself."—If his distempered nature is not healed, if his soul continues unredeemed; it is not because there is no "Balm in Gilead;" it is not because "the arm of the LORD is shortened, that it cannot save," or the fountain of LOVE so exhausted, that its streams have ceased to flow—but because men will not avail themselves of the healing Balm; because they refuse to be gathered by that compassionate Arm, that is continually stretched forth to save; because they will not open their souls, to receive the Waters of Life. Their eyes are so blinded by the false glare of earthly beauty, that they cannot see the surpassing excellency of the Divine Glory—their ears are so deaf, that they have no delight in hearing or obeying the Divine Voice—they are content to walk on in the broad way, and suffer the enemy of their souls to take them captive at his pleasure. Thus entered sin at the beginning—thus it continueth, increaseth and prevaleth!

No

No man, in his present deplorable state, can open that eye which was blinded by sin ; nor unstop that ear which was sealed by his apostasy from his Maker ; nor save or deliver himself from the bondage of corruption. Herein, therefore, is the UNIVERSAL LOVE OF GOD made manifest, that " he hath laid " help upon one that is Mighty, who is able to save " to the uttermost those that come to him ;" that he hath appointed and prepared a " Seed that can bruise " the serpent's head ;" that he hath caused his Light to shine in the Hearts of all men ; and hath called all men every where to repent—Now if man still continues to shut his eyes, and harden his heart, and refuse to be reconciled, " his destruction is of himself, " and God will be just when he judgeth."

But here the grand question may be asked—How doth God manifest himself to his creatures ? There is no Revelation in these days—no spiritual visions now—no such sight of God, as Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, and the primitive Christians were favoured with—God forbid!—for surely where there is no vision, no sight or sense of heavenly things, there is the Lost State indeed!—where there is no Revelation, there can be no true knowledge of God—for what saith the Scripture—"None knoweth the " Father but the SON, and he to whom the SON will " reveal him?"

Ever since the vail was spread over the human heart, there never was any other way in any age, nor can there be in this age, of coming to the true Knowledge of God, but by Revelation : that is, by taking off the vail, and removing the covering that hides the Face of God from man.—Men " have " sought out many inventions," and devised many ways and means of coming to the knowledge of the
the

the DEITY; moral and even mathematical demonstrations of his existence, have been attempted; but all in vain. As such inventions and devices have increased, sorrow and perplexity have increased also: and even if they have succeeded so far, as to satisfy the natural understanding, what is it, at best, but a kind of historical knowledge, a strong conceit or imagination of something concerning God, without any thing like a sensibility of his Presence, or an intuitive self-evident conviction of his nature and attributes?—Far different this from the knowledge which Job experienced, and which every real Christian may express in his language: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now hath mine eye seen thee: therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

It is not improbable, but Job might have amused himself, like some of our modern philosophizing Christians, with fine-spun theories and speculations upon the nature and attributes of the DIVINITY; and whilst the tide of temporal prosperity continued to flow in upon him, whilst “he washed his steps in butter, and the rock poured out for him rivers of oil,” whilst his health continued unimpaired, and his domestic bliss uninterrupted, such empty researches might have been sufficient to entertain his imagination; and such an outward knowledge of the MOST HIGH, might satisfy a soul, that was yet insensible of any spiritual or temporal wants or distresses. But let the hand of God fall heavy upon him; let his body be visited with pain and sickness, and his soul wounded with grief and disappointment; let him be stripped of all his worldly affluence, and deprived of all his domestic comforts; and he will soon find, that the wants of nature, when deeply felt, are not to be supplied by reasoning and speculation; that an

an outward hearſay knowledge of God, is of no avail; that it cannot adminiſter the leaſt relief either to the body or the mind; that it cannot ſooth or mitigate one bodily pain, or ſend one ray of light into the dark and comfortleſs regions of the ſoul.

Go to the chambers of ſickneſs, viſit the melancholy retreats of indigence and woe! produce there your ſtrong reasonings,—ſtrive, with learned labour, to open and convince the underſtandings of your ſuffering brethren—enumerate to them all the outward evidences, that you can collect, of the great truths of religion—give them proof upon proof, demonſtration upon demonſtration—talk to them of the Nature and Attributes of God, and the immortality of their ſouls—tell them what the SON OF GOD hath done and ſuffered for ſinners; what are the means of reconciliation, and what the ſure grounds of an happy death—give them all that they can receive “by the hearing of the ear”—and what have you done, and what have they gained?—Why you have done juſt as much as an ignorant phyſician would do, who entertained his patient with a learned diſſertation upon the virtues and excellencies of a certain medicine, which he had ſomewhere read or heard of, as admirably adapted to the diſorder, but which he had never ſeen with his eyes, and of the nature of which he knew nothing by his own experience. Thus it is with this outward knowledge of God: the poor ſoul is left to feed upon words or ideas, and to ſeek comfort, in vain, in empty ſpeculations.

Fruitleſs, indeed, are ſuch attempts as theſe! Till the ſoul is ſhaken to her very center, till the ſtone is removed from the door of the ſepulchre, that

that God, who "makes darkness his secret place," can never be seen. The eye must be turned inwardly, to view what is passing in the inmost soul, to discover what its wants and necessities are, as well as what will supply them, and yield it peace, and yield it happiness, from an inexhaustible source. It must feel its own darkness, before it can seek to have it enlightened—The same Light that breaks in upon it like the dawn of day, gives it the first sensibility of distress, as well as the first sensibility of consolation: "now hath mine eye seen thee; therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"—I now feel the misery of nature without God—I feel nothing but darkness, and want, and hunger, and thirst! But in this darkness, under this want, in this hunger and thirst, the soul must wait, without reasoning, without repining, in stillness, in silence, till the invisible God shines into the darkness, and till the darkness comprehends and eagerly imbibes the Light, and he, in whom is no darkness at all, manifesteth his Presence by a self-evident sensibility.

Thus it is, that man, by virtue of the Redeeming Power of the Second Adam, implanted in his heart as a spark of Heavenly flame, hidden under the flesh and blood of fallen nature, is revived, quickened, and enlightened. The Heavenly Birth soon perceives and owns its parent—the outward knowledge gives way to the inward manifestation—and God, and Heaven, and Goodness, and Grace, are seen and known, and felt by their own incontestible workings in the human heart. Hence, the fruits of the SPIRIT, the fruits of Heaven, begin to bud and blossom: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness," are felt and practised; and the soul lives and breathes in the Heavenly world, even whilst she inherits this frail tenement of clay.

And

And now, my brethren, is not such a Knowledge of God worth possessing? A Knowledge, that unites you to him; makes you One Heart and Spirit with him; gives the highest relish to all the joys, and the firmest support under all the evils of life; which will stand by you, when every outward comfort fails, when relations, friends, wealth, power, and all that earth is able to supply, can no longer yield you the least support or satisfaction.

Some of the great obstacles and impediments to the attainment of this Knowledge, I shall enumerate in my next discourse.

DISCOURSE XVII.

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD INTERNAL AND PRACTICAL.

JOB, CHAP. xlii. VER. 5, 6.

“ I HAVE HEARD OF THEE BY THE HEARING
“ OF THE EAR; BUT NOW HATH MINE EYE
“ SEEN THEE : THEREFORE DO I ABHOR MY-
“ SELF, AND REPENT IN DUST and ASHES.”

IN a former discourse from these words, I explained to you the difference between that Knowledge of God which is obtained by “ the hearing of the ear,” and that which arises in the human heart, from a spiritual sensibility of his Presence and Power within us. I observed, that the former was, at best, but a kind of historical knowledge, or, perhaps, nothing more than a strong conceit or imagination of something concerning God ; far different from that ~~intuitive~~, self-evident, saving Knowledge of him, which Job speaks of in the text, and which every truly pious soul cannot but feel. I endeavoured, likewise, to point out the Rise and Progress of this Knowledge, as well as the blessed Fruits or Effects of which

which it is certainly productive. I then concluded with asking you, whether such a knowledge of God as I had been describing, was not worth your possessing? A knowledge, that would unite you to him, make you One Spirit, One Will, One Nature, with your Heavenly Father—that would give the highest relish to all the joys, and support you under all the evils of life; that will stand by you, when every outward comfort fails, when friends, and relations, and wealth, and power, and all that earth is able to supply, can no longer yield you the least support or satisfaction.

Convinced, as I think you must needs be, of the infinite value of such a possession as this, I would now ask you, what it is that keeps you from desiring and seeking to obtain it? Your answer, if you knew yourselves, would be, that you did not at present feel the want of it.—This state of insensibility, therefore, to “the things that belong to your peace,” must arise from certain obstacles and impediments, which, agreeable to my promise, I now proceed to enumerate.

We are told, that the famous Selden, on his death-bed, sent for archbishop Usher, and, in the course of a most serious and affecting conversation, assured him, that he had accurately surveyed almost every part of literature and science, that was held in the highest esteem by the sons of men; that he had a study filled with the most valuable books and manuscripts in the world; and yet, that, at that time, he could not recollect one single passage out of any volume in this large collection, upon which he could rest his soul, or from which he could derive one ray of consolation, except some that he had met with in the Holy Scriptures; and that the most remarkable

passage that then made the deepest impression upon his mind, was this : “ For the GRACE OF GOD that
 “ bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all men,
 “ teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly
 “ lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and
 “ godly, in this present world ; looking for that
 “ blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the
 “ great God, and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST.”

“ The GRACE OF GOD,” indeed, “ hath appeared
 “ unto all men.” One of the principal impediments
 to their sight of this Grace, is what poor Selden com-
 plained of, viz. a looking for it in the writings of
 human reason, and expecting to find it by the same
 learned labour with which we investigate some ma-
 thematical or logical truth. Selden, with all his
 learning, therefore, was obliged to seek for a True
 Knowledge of God, in the volume of his own heart ;
 and, agreeable to the direction of an outward re-
 velation, to look for the appearance of that Grace
 which it promised, in a place, which his genius had
 not yet explored, and which could never have been
 revealed to his outward eye. He had, no doubt,
 “ heard of God by the hearing of the ear,” and
 could have accurately demonstrated his existence and
 attributes—but, till that blessed moment, “ his eye
 “ had never seen him.”—

Thus, all those fine literary accomplishments,
 which feed the pride of the scholar, though, when
 properly applied, they have their uses, and great uses
 too, must, nevertheless, be sacrificed, when they
 prove, as they frequently do, very great impedi-
 ments to a spiritual knowledge of God. The most
 towering genius upon earth, can never gain admit-
 tance into the Kingdom of Heaven, till he conde-
 scends to the simplicity of a child, and with faith and
 humility

humility opens his heart to his Heavenly Father for that true wisdom, which can only come by immediate revelation from him.

But the "wisdom of this world," or "science falsely so called," is not the only impediment to our spiritual sight of God. There are many, who, under a specious pretence of making a proper and honourable provision for their families, involve themselves so deeply in business, as it is called, that they will not allow themselves a single moment to attend to the concerns of another world. And were we to enquire the reason of this strange conduct, they might very properly make us the same answer, which the Duke of Alva made to King Henry IV. upon another occasion: Did you observe, my Lord Duke, said the monarch, the great eclipse of the sun, that lately happened?—No, may it please your majesty, replied the Duke—I have so much business to do on earth, that I have no leisure to look up to heaven. In truth, my brethren, your mere men of business, and a trading city like ours abounds with temptations to this kind of life; I say, your mere men of business, either forget, in the hurry of affairs, that their souls are immortal, and ought therefore to be fed and attended to at least as much as their bodies; or else, to quiet their consciences, they reason themselves into a belief that their souls may die with their bodies, and therefore all thought or concern about religious matters, is useless, and will only interrupt their worldly pursuits.

Success in trade introduces wealth, and, with it, its never-failing attendant, luxury. From this fatal source proceed a thousand impediments to a religious life, that are more readily felt than enumerated. Hence, an amazing increase of expence, with an increasing

increasing taste for high living, sumptuous apparel, and splendid entertainments. By an immoderate attention to these, the minds of men are gradually weaned from those good impressions, which they had received in their earlier years, from sober, frugal, and industrious parents.—The peasant treads close upon the heels of the courtier; and such is the reigning fondness for what is called fashionable life, that those of the most scanty fortunes, are scarcely to be distinguished from people of the most affluent circumstances, or those who move in the highest sphere; and even indigence itself puts in its claim for a share of the outward glitter.—And it were well, if the evil proceeded no further than this.

But if things should come to such a pass, that Religion itself, nay, even the very appearance of it, should be deemed unfashionable; if people should be afraid to come to the house of God, lest they should have their taste called in question, lest they should be suspected by their gay and worldly friends, of entertaining one serious thought about another world, about God and their own souls; if the Sabbath, instead of being wholly dedicated to, and spent in the service of that God by whom it was instituted, should be either lolled away in indolence, or spent in posting of books, settling accounts at home, or devoted to entertainments and parties of pleasure abroad; if such should be the consequences of an immoderate pursuit of business, and an inordinate fondness for a fashionable life, would you not conclude that these were surely the greatest and most dangerous impediments to a true and saving knowledge of God? If these evils have not appeared in such a degree, as I have described them, I think, at least, they are not far from it; and I begin to fear, that the time is approaching, when many amongst

us will be so far from "seeing God," as Job expresses it, "with their eyes," that they will not even "hear of him by the hearing of the ear." For believe me, my brethren, we cannot know God, we cannot even desire to know him, whilst our whole hearts and minds are engaged in the things of the world, whilst we turn, with all the eagerness of desire, to the senseless pageantry and pleasures of a vain and trifling age.

Shall I spare myself the pain of telling, what ought not to be an offence to you to hear?—or, will you give me leave to point out to you, in plainer terms, what I apprehend to be your principal impediments to such a view of the Divine Majesty, as would lead you to "abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes?"

It cannot be denied, that luxury, extravagance, and dissipation of every kind, have, within these few years, made a most rapid progress amongst us.—Your ministers have long, perhaps too long, been silent upon these subjects.—But though preventive medicines are sometimes given with success, yet the symptoms of a disorder, as they appear in its process, are what must principally direct the application. What they have now to say, comes to you with this corroborating circumstance in its support, that we speak not from what we have apprehended might be, but from what we have seen hath actually come to pass.

We have observed, with real heart-felt concern, a general proneness to pleasure, and a general indifference to the very forms of religion.—Our discourses, though without particular applications, have been adapted, as far as we were able to judge, to the

the circumstances of the people whom we addressed. —We have not, however, been unconcerned spectators of your conduct. We have observed, with what eagerness many of you have crowded to scenes of amusement and dissipation, and what backwardness you have shewn in attending the publick worship of God. Even the man of business could devote many hours in the week, to the calls of worldly pleasure, whilst he refused to give one to the calls of God upon his own Sabbath.

Matters are, indeed, too serious to be passed by in silence. We are your ministers, we are your servants; we should not be faithful to you, nor to ourselves, were we to neglect giving you the alarm, when we saw, or even apprehended, that you were in imminent danger. The enemy hath already entered your houses—he hath entered your hearts! Under the specious disguise and appellation of innocent amusements, he is secretly drawing off your hearts from God, and carrying you away captive at his will—Use not, I beseech you, the word innocent, in vindicating your pleasures—Nothing can be innocent, let it be ever so seemingly trifling, that wholly engrosses the mind, and takes it off from attending to the great concerns of Salvation. Amusements, though they may be innocent at first, become more or less criminal, as they have a greater or less tendency to wean the heart from God. Upon this maxim, I leave it to your own experience to determine, what particular kind of amusements hath the greatest tendency to effect this in you.

Far be it from me, to declaim, with an affected pharisaical severity, against innocent recreations of any kind. But, Gracious God! can a Christian complain of want of amusements, that has a family
round

round him; that has a dear child, or children to educate; that has brothers, or sisters, or relations, or friends, with whom he can live in a most sweet and delightful intercourse of endearing offices? What a strange perversion of nature, sense, and reason, to take delight in going abroad, to have our affections excited by imaginary objects, and romantic representations, when we have so many real ones at home, in the course of every day, and in the way of our duty, to call forth and promote their best and highest exercise? I do not descend to particulars—let these few hints suffice.—I have delivered them in love—in love, I hope, they will be received.

Permit me, however, once more to repeat—that it is this immoderate fondness for pleasure and dissipation, that keeps you from feeling the real wants of your nature, and, consequently, from applying to the true and only Source, from whence they can be fully satisfied. But this deception cannot last long; false happiness has no sure foundation; it must therefore, totter and fall at last. You will not always be as gay, as healthy, and as prosperous, as you are now—The vigour of the best constitution cannot long preserve you from sickness, and from death—Neither the abundance of wealth, nor the increase of power, nor the support of popularity, can long protect you from disappointment and distress. You may think as lightly as you please of religious duties, now; but, depend upon it, the hour is at hand, when every little neglect of them, every little preference you have given to the solicitations of pleasure, will wound you to the very heart. You will then be convinced of the danger of trifling with that immortal spirit that is within you; and deeply regret, that you have been so far from having “seen
Y “God,”

“God,” spiritually manifested in your hearts, that you have scarcely “heard of him by the hearing of the ear.”

I cannot dismiss you, without one observation more. Hypocrisy, and a pharisaical righteousness, are as great, and perhaps greater impediments to the true Knowledge of God, than any of those I have already mentioned. The root is deeper, the evil more difficult to be eradicated.

Should any of you, therefore, have been solacing yourselves with the view of your own fancied virtues, and thanking God, that you have not, like others, been running after this or the other new and fashionable amusement, but have kept yourselves strictly within the pale of outward duties; I beseech you not to be too liberal of your censures, nor too forward in prying into the conduct of your neighbours; but to look at home with a jealous and watchful eye, to examine your own hearts, and see, that whilst ye are “paying tithe of mint, and annise, and cummin,” ye do not “neglect the weightier matters of the law, mercy, justice, forbearance, and charity.” Whilst ye have “heard of God by the hearing of the ear,” your eyes, perhaps may not yet have seen him; whilst you are abhorring and standing aloof from your brethren, as if ye were holier than they, ye do not “abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.” Remember, that a censorious spirit, and a disposition to think and speak evil of others, is as foreign to the Spirit of Christianity, as any other evil temper or disposition can be.

To conclude, a true Christian will lament the general decline of Religion, and wish and pray for better times, without being angry, or shewing any marks

marks of unkindness to his brethren. Yea, so far from keeping himself at a distance, he will mingle, as occasion or duty calls, with men of every class. He will be religious without severity, and chearful without dissipation; he will instruct without seeming to dictate, and reprove with such mildness, that his very censures shall be received as the highest tokens of his love.

In this sweet Spirit of the Gospel of Jesus, Heaven grant that we may mutually receive and impart such truths, as "belong to our peace," both here and hereafter!

DISCOURSE XVIII.

ON THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

St. LUKE, CHAP. ii. from VER. 6 to 20.

“AND SO IT WAS, THAT WHILE THEY
“WERE THERE, THE DAYS WERE ACCOM-
“PLISHED, THAT SHE SHOULD BE DE-
“LIVERED, &c.

IN the first chapter of his Gospel, the Evangelist has given a particular account of the conception and birth of John the Baptist, the Salutation of the BLESSED VIRGIN, and her miraculous conception of the HOLY JESUS. According to a regular series of historical facts, this second chapter opens with a like circumstantial narrative of the nativity of our BLESSED REDEEMER.

An edict is issued by Augustus Cæsar, enjoining all the subjects of the Roman empire to repair to their several cities, in order to have their names enrolled for a general taxation. In obedience to this imperial decree, Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary, is obliged to leave Nazareth, the place of his residence,

residence, and take a journey to Bethlehem the city of David, to be enrolled there, because he was of the house and lineage of David. Mary, his espoused wife, though "great with child," accompanies him. A most remarkable interposition of Divine Providence appears in the whole transaction. The prophets had foretold, that the MESSIAH should be born at Bethlehem, and that he should descend from the family of David. The Roman emperor's decree was rendered subservient to the accomplishment of these prophecies. Mary was thereby brought to Bethlehem, and delivered of the MESSIAH, and her descent from the royal line of David was publicly recognized.

Ver. 6. "And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished, that she should be delivered."

Ver. 7. "And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

A plain but affecting narrative! The apartments of the inn, we may suppose, were occupied by more honourable guests. The Virgin Mother was content to retire to a stable, and to lie down among brutes. Hapless Mary! we are ready to exclaim—is it thus, that the promises of the Angel are to be accomplished? Is this to be "highly favoured?" And are these the blessings, by which thou art to be distinguished from the rest of thy sex? Must thy spotless Babe, at the very instant of his birth, enter upon his Labour of Love? and must the stable at Bethlehem be the first scene of that awful drama, which

which was afterwards closed on the trembling top of Calvary?

But in what manner was the appearance of this illustrious Babe made known to the world? Should not the princes and great ones of the earth have had proper intelligence of his arrival, that they might have hastened from their several kingdoms and provinces, thrown themselves at his feet, paid him the homage due to his exalted character, and obliged all their subjects to do the same? No—"God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, neither are his ways as man's ways." The same reason for which he thought proper to send his Angel to the humble Mary, induced him now to give the first notice of his Son's birth to a few simple shepherds.

Ver. 8. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."

Ver. 9. "And lo, the Angel of the LORD came upon them, and the Glory of the LORD shone round about them, and they were sore afraid."

The pastoral life was once thought to be the happiest and most innocent life upon earth. Far from the noise of cities, and the hurry of the busy world, free from its anxieties, and ignorant of many of its vices, they enjoyed the full tranquillity of the rural scene. As their flocks were their only care, they had abundant leisure for meditation and prayer. As they had no schemes of interest or ambition to accomplish, they were plain, unprejudiced, and undesigning men. A few of these shepherds were in the fields, bordering upon Bethlehem, watching by turns their sheep the whole night, as was the custom of the country; when

when their senses were suddenly struck with a great and unusual glare of light, in the midst of which appeared an Angel of God, bright and glorious. They were confounded with the excessive splendor. They trembled, and were sore afraid. But the Angel, with all the sweetness and chearfulness of Heaven in his countenance, thus comfortably addressed them:

Ver. 10. "Fear not: for, behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Ver. 11. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is CHRIST the LORD."

Be not afraid! I am come, not to terrify you, but to bring you great and joyous tidings, in which not yourselves only, but the whole nation of the Jews, yea, all the inhabitants of the world, are deeply interested! For he, of whom all the prophets prophesied, and whom all the people of Israel have, according to the promise of God, long and ardently expected, even the MESSIAH, the Saviour and Deliverer, is this night born in Bethlehem, in the city of David.

Ver. 12. "And this shall be a sign unto you—a sign, by which you shall know him, the moment you enter into his presence—"ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Scarce had the Angel delivered his message, when a whole choir of his celestial brethren burst forth with additional splendors from the midnight sky, and saluted the shepherds ears with a birth-day anthem.

Ver. 13. "And

Ver. 13. "And suddenly there was with the
 "Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising
 "God, and saying:" Ver. 14. "Glory to God
 "in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will
 "towards men!"

No expressions of joy could have been more admirably adapted than these, to so glorious an occasion; for the glory of the Divine Majesty was most eminently displayed in that gracious message of peace and reconciliation, of Love and Good-Will, which was here published to the world. If those pure and perfect Intelligences could thus testify their transport upon an event, in which an inferior order of beings were more immediately concerned; surely, that order are continually bound to render the highest and most grateful returns of praise, acknowledgment, and love!

For us men, and for our Salvation, a God becomes incarnate. The ETERNAL WORD clothes himself in clay. He assumes our nature in its most helpless state; and is born, like one of us, a naked, weak, and wailing Babe. Thus began the mighty process of Redeeming Love! To rescue us from the misery of a fallen life; to restore the Divine Image to our souls; to regain, for us, that state of rectitude, of union and communion with God, which we had lost in Adam; and completely to repair the ruins of nature—were the benevolent purposes, which the God of Love determined to accomplish by sending into the world his only-begotten Son. Well, therefore, might the inhabitants of Heaven, at the prospect of such ineffable goodness and condescension, break forth, enraptured, into these sublime and joyous strains: "Glory to God in the highest; and
 "on earth Peace, Good-Will towards men!"

Ver. 15. "And

Ver. 15. "And it came to pass, as the Angels
"were gone away from them into Heaven, the shep-
"herds said one to another: Let us now go even
"unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come
"to pass, which the LORD hath made known unto us."

They did not stay to "confer with flesh and blood;" to reason, and doubt, and hesitate, whether this might not be a delusion; but, in the true simplicity of faith, improved the heavenly warning, and hastened to Bethlehem, in full assurance of meeting with every thing conformable to the notice they had received.

Ver. 16. "And they came with haste, and found
"Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."

Glorious confirmation and reward of the shepherds faith! O that all who call themselves Christians, would with the same child-like simplicity surrender themselves to JESUS CHRIST! They have frequent and sufficient warnings of his kind intentions towards them. They are assured, that he is the Light and Life of men; and that if they apply to him, they will receive the most salutary manifestations of this Life and Light in their souls. Were they to listen and obey these warnings, and go as they are directed, they would as surely find this heavenly Babe in their hearts, as the shepherds found him in the stable at Bethlehem.

Ver. 17. "And when they had seen it, they made
"known abroad the saying which was told them con-
"cerning this Child."

In like manner, the true Believer, who hath experienced the operation of the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit, that the Child JESUS is born in

his heart, cannot but “make known abroad,” what he has felt and experienced of this spiritual birth, though his testimony rarely produces any better effects upon his hearers, than that of wonder and astonishment.

Ver. 18. “And all they that heard it, wondered “at those things, which were told them by the shepherds.”

“They were greatly amazed, and at a loss to know, what to make of the report. They could not think it likely, that such a set of plain, honest, undesigning men should have formed the story, and should go about to impose it on the world. They could not but know, indeed, that their testimony was strengthened by a general expectation, at that time, of the MESSIAH’S appearance, and by the prevailing opinion that his birth would be at Bethlehem: yet they were astonished, that he should be born of such mean parents, and in such despicable circumstances; and that persons of such low figure as these shepherds, should be the men to whom God had sent an Angel to reveal it.”

From the conduct of the shepherds, the Evangelist passes to that of the Blessed Virgin, which differs much from theirs, as might indeed be expected from her different situation and circumstances. For whereas, “they made known abroad the saying that was told “them concerning this child,” we are assured, that

Ver. 19. “Mary kept all these things, and pondered “them in her heart.”

By “these things,” we are doubtless to understand the whole series of astonishing events, from the first salutation of the Angel, to this visit of the shepherds.
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Under the power of these reflections, methinks I see the Blessed Mother, bending disconsolate over her shivering infant ! Her countenance speaks a thousand tender emotions of her heart ! It is a look, composed of deep anxiety, maternal fondness, compassion and love inexpressible ! In her varying features one may read too the varying sensibilities of her soul.

Sweet heavenly babe ! How mild, how serenely soft thy aspect ! How seemingly satisfied with thy hard allotment ! Surely the bleak winds will pierce thy tender frame ! Surely the rugged winter means not to relent for thee ! And yet the Messenger of Heaven hath assured me, that thou shouldst be a **JESUS**, a **SAVIOUR** ; that thou shouldst be called the **SON OF THE HIGHEST** ; that thou shouldst sit upon the throne of **DAVID**, and that of thy kingdom there should be no end. But where are the ensigns of royalty ? where are the tokens of thy illustrious birth ? Instead of a sumptuous palace, thou art lodged in a loathsome stable. No bed of down receives thy precious limbs ! No warm and comfortable apartments shield thee from the rude inclemencies of the air ! A manger is thy cradle ! And thy poor indigent mother seems, under Providence, to be thine only support ! No courtiers attend to bow the knee, to pay the customary homage due to royalty, and bid thee welcome to the throne of Israel. A few simple shepherds have indeed been here, and tendered thee their honest obedience ! They told too a wondrous tale, from the several circumstances of which, I am now more and more persuaded, that the finger of God is here ; that his Veracity spoke in the salutation of the Angel ; that his Power and Goodness will be exalted by thy present Humiliation ; and that I must henceforth feel more than a mother's fondness, and look upon thee, sweet Babe ! as my **LORD**, my **LIFE**, and my **REDEEMER**.

Such were the astonishing circumstances that employed the attention of Mary; and thus it was, that “she kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” She did not publish her sentiments to the world. She did not court the honour and respect of men, by displaying the dignity of her babe, or telling abroad what she knew concerning the child; but satisfied with her own conviction, humbly waited, till Providence should make use of some other means to acquaint the world with these “tidings of great joy.”

If now, like Mary, we seriously attend to, and ponder in our hearts all the amazing circumstances of this great event, we cannot fail, I think, of learning from thence a lesson of Humility. This amiable and peculiarly Christian grace, is the foundation and ground-work of every other excellence and perfection. Without it, we can have no pretensions to Christianity; we are strangers to the Truth and Spirit of the Gospel: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot be my disciples!” As long as pride, vanity, arrogance, and inordinate self-love, keep possession of thy soul, be assured, O man, that the Babe of Bethlehem will not take up his residence with thee! In order to invite this Heavenly Guest to thine heart, it must be as empty and free from worldly ornaments, as was the stable in which he was born. “Be ye then cloathed with humility.” This plain and modest garb best becomes the disciples of so meek a Master. Thou must feel thyself very poor, before thou canst be rich in CHRIST. Thou must part with all that thou hast, for this Pearl of great Price; and must come to him as naked and helpless as a new-born babe, in a true child-like simplicity of faith. It is this alone can give thee sweet tranquillity of soul,
even

even that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," that "white stone and new name, which no man knoweth, save him that receiveth it." Thy soul will then "magnify the LORD," and thy spirit will rejoice in God thy SAVIOUR."

This inward spiritual change, is not the consequence of a bare meditation upon the circumstances of our Lord's nativity, a simple assent to, or belief of, the historical account given by the Evangelist. No, it arises from an experience of the whole process in our own souls. In vain was this Divine Infant born into the world, unless he is likewise born in our hearts, not figuratively born, which is no birth at all, but manifesting himself by a vital and essential union with our spirits. This is regeneration, our new-birth, our birth to light, and life, and glory. Those who have experienced this, must taste and feel, in some degree, the raptures of those exalted spirits, who dwell continually in the Beatifying Presence of their Master. They are raised above flesh and blood: "It is not they that live, but CHRIST that liveth in them." They are sensible of the daily growth of that Heavenly Nature, which they receive from him, and which diffuseth a light through their souls, that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Like the shepherds returning from Bethlehem, they are continually "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they have heard and seen."

